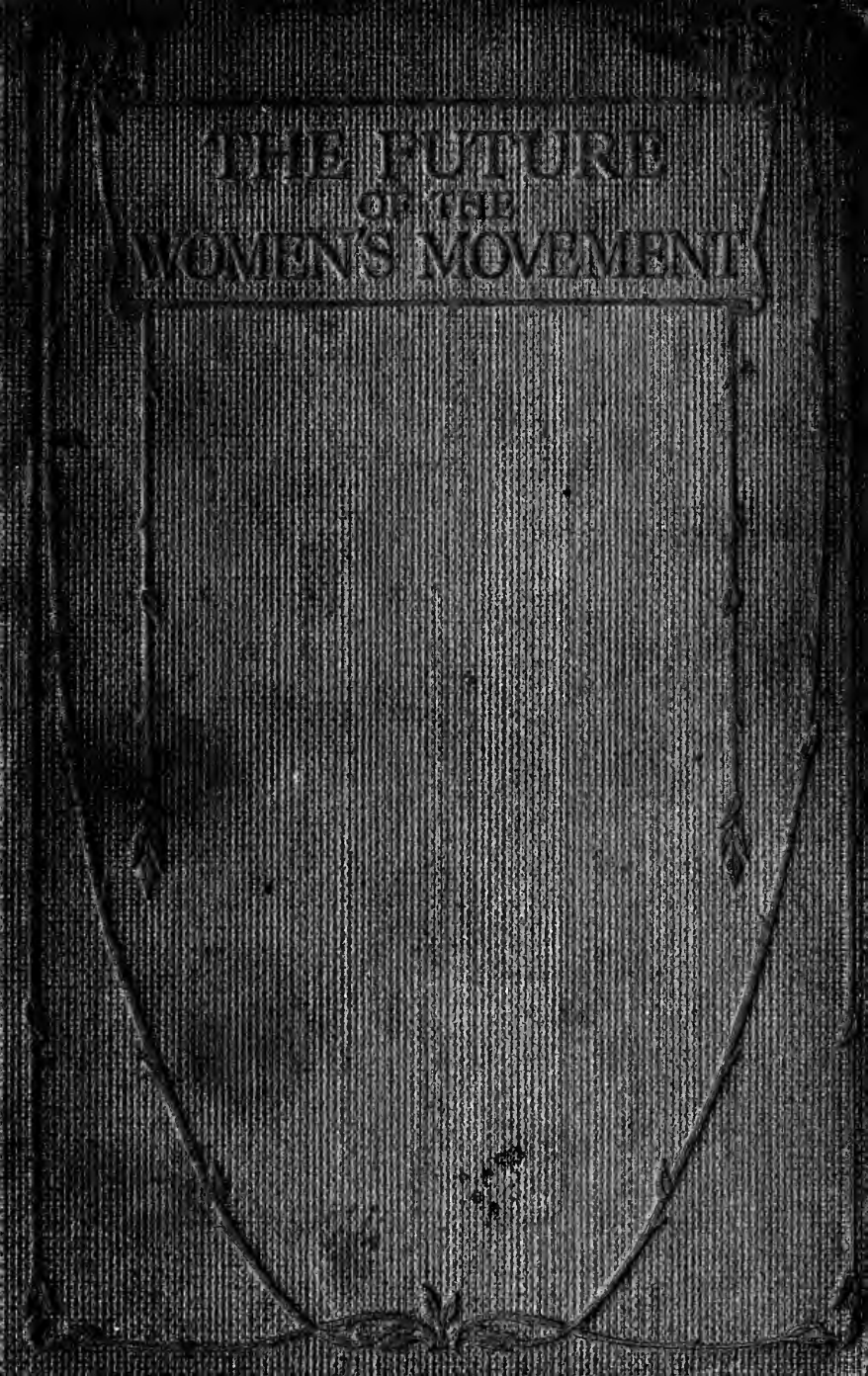


THE FUTURE  
OF THE  
WOMEN'S MOVEMENT



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THE FUTURE OF THE WOMEN'S  
MOVEMENT



# THE FUTURE OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

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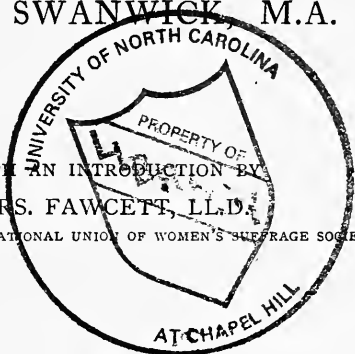
BY

H. M. SWANWICK, M.A.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

MRS. FAWCETT, LL.D.

PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL UNION OF WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE SOCIETIES



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TO

F. T. S.



## PREFACE

WOMEN in the movement often wish that the word humanist had not been appropriated, because it would far more properly connote the women's movement than the word feminist.

It is significant of much that there is in the English language no commonly used substantive corresponding to "*homo*." There is need, of course, for the words man and woman, but there is also need for a word denoting the species, irrespective of sex, and I have been driven to make use of a locution not common in English, in writing "a human." But the common pronoun is non-existent and I have not used the neuter, lest it should alarm nervous persons. Perhaps when we have got over the panic fear of unsexing ourselves, we may find it safe to speak of a human, just as we do of a baby, as "it."

There may seem to be a disappointing lack of prophesy in a book avowedly dealing with the future; but since I believe the women's movement to be a seeking for knowledge and good, to show

what is reasonable and good in the movement is to show what will persist and triumph. Through all our faults and mistakes, we women are aiming at better understanding and co-operation with men, and a better adaptation to one another of conditions and persons. We are having to hammer out for ourselves the right principles of government. We can take them ready-made from no man. Doubtless we shall flounder considerably, as men have done—and do. But there is little fear that in the long-run the best minds of men and women will not have a common principle.

Meanwhile we have to resist the tendency to easy and cheap generalisations about woman, her sphere, her vocation, and her capacity, based upon a very small amount of very partial investigation and a huge amount of inherited prejudice and native conceit. Men who ought to have some respect for scientific methods will, when some *à priori* theory of woman's proper sphere has closed their minds, make the most palpably faulty deductions from imperfect data, and use their reputation in some other branch of science as cover for their bad reasoning. No statistics are more useful than vital statistics, and none have been more misused to prove some foregone conclusion. Everyone experienced in investigation knows how helpful it is to

have some general hypothesis in view, by which to co-ordinate all phenomena, but knows also how necessary it is to be constantly watchful lest the hypothesis should obscure new and unexpected phenomena. When the investigator is himself personally involved, and when the hypothesis is one which the majority of men have thought self-evident for ages, and when the strongest of all impulses, next to hunger, confuses the mind of the investigator, we are justified in being very sceptical about the positive nature of his conclusions, until he can satisfy us that they have been reached by strictly logical methods of agreement and difference.

If to some reasonable and civilised men it may seem that I have given undue importance to the foolishnesses and barbarisms of another kind of men, I would ask those men to remember that these are among our masters and we may not ignore them. We might like to treat them "with the contempt they deserve," but we have at present to live under the laws that they help to make. Doubtless, when we are free, we shall suffer fools more gladly than we do now, having less to fear from them.



## INTRODUCTION

THOSE who open this book expecting to find in it a romantic sketch, rather in the style of *Erewhon*, of what the civilisation of the twentieth century is likely to be after women have won their freedom, will be doomed to disappointment. It does not deal with what a humorist in the Cambridge Historical Society used to call "that department of history which treats of the future." Those who look for a plentiful supply of prophecy will not find it; but they will find a masterly sketch of the sources and aims of the women's movement; and, in the author's own words, a brief survey of the directions in which it appears to be travelling. They will find also wisdom, and knowledge, and understanding. Mrs. Swanwick avoids cheap and easy generalisation. She writes from a wide and deep knowledge, which has been gained from years of active work, especially in the women's suffrage movement as it exists here and now; and she writes with the temperance and restraint which come of the philosophic mind.

Her book will be read and digested by her fellow-workers. They are quite certain to make it their own, for it is an armoury of facts and arguments bearing on their work. It ought also to be studied by every intelligent man and woman who perceives that the women's movement is one of the biggest things that has ever taken place in the history of the world. Other movements towards freedom have aimed at raising the status of a comparatively small group or class. But the women's movement aims at nothing less than raising the status of an entire sex—half the human race—to lift it up to the freedom and valour of womanhood. It affects more people than any former reform movement, for it spreads over the whole world. It is more deep-seated, for it enters into the home and modifies the personal character. No greater praise can be given to Mrs. Swanwick's book than to say that she treats of this great subject in a manner worthy of it.

Her pages on militancy will be carefully studied. She is known to be deeply antagonistic to violence in all its forms, and she gives the reasons for the faith that is in her. It is also well known that she is a leading member of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, the chief of the non-militant suffrage organisations. But though she criticises severely the Women's Social and



Political Union, she is not among those who can see nothing but harm in their activities. Militant suffragism is essentially revolutionary, and, like other revolutionary agitations, has arisen from a want of harmony between economic and educational status and political status. Educationally, socially, and industrially women have made enormous advances during the last sixty years. But the laws controlling their political status have stood still. Similar conditions have invariably led to revolutionary outbursts except where lawmakers have had the sense to recognise the situation in time and adjust the political status of the group concerned to the changes which had already taken place in its general condition. It is by making these timely changes, and by grafting the bud of new ideas on the stem of old institutions, that our countrymen have shown their practical political instinct, and have, on the whole, saved the nation from the ruinous waste of revolution. They have not yet shown this good sense about women. But the signs of the times are full of hope that they may revert to type and be wise in time.

Dr. Arnold, writing from France within a generation of the Terror, said in reference to the destruction of the feudal power of the nobles over the French peasantry: "The work has been done . . .

and in my opinion the blessing is enough to compensate the evils of the French Revolution ; for the good endures, while the effects of the massacres and devastation are fast passing away." If that could be said of the Terror cannot it be even more positively said of the comparatively innocuous "militancy" of recent years? The good endures, while the evil is temporary and passes away, is as true to-day as it was a hundred years ago.

MILLICENT GARRETT FAWCETT.

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# THE FUTURE OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

## CHAPTER I

### CAUSES OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

"New occasions teach new duties; time makes ancient good  
uncouth;  
They must upward still, and onward, who would keep abreast  
of Truth;  
Lo, before us gleam her camp-fires! we ourselves must pilgrims  
be,  
Launch our Mayflower, and steer boldly through the desperate  
winter sea,  
Nor attempt the Future's portal with the Past's blood-rusted  
key."

J. R. LOWELL.

THE world is full of books about women, —  
most often alluded to in such books as  
"Woman." The vast majority of these books have  
been written by men, and until quite lately the few  
women who wrote about women confined themselves  
to repeating the precepts laid down by men. There  
were remarkable exceptions, of course: Mary Astell  
and Mary Wollstonecraft, Emily and Charlotte  
Brontë, George Sand and Elizabeth Barrett Browning

## 2 FUTURE OF WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

spoke as women and not as echoes of men. Quite recently women have suddenly broken the long silence, and there is a flood of exposition which is likely, from its volume and force, to make confusion take the place of silence. Ellen Key in Sweden, Rosa Mayreder in Austria, Mrs. Gilman in America and Olive Schreiner in South Africa are a few of the most distinguished writers; but there are troops of others who, in books and magazines and papers, strive to deliver their souls. This little book aims merely at being a brief survey of the women's movement and of the directions it appears to be taking; a survey which shall deal with principles and the broad aspect of things rather than with details, and that will rather suggest what are the difficulties and in what spirit they should be approached, than offer a universal solution for the deepest and most complex problem that has been set before the human race.

The women's movement in Great Britain has for the last seven years been directed so considerably into political channels, the struggle for the parliamentary vote has absorbed so much of the active, organised and thinking women of the nation, that one hears people talk sometimes as if the suffrage movement *were* the women's movement, and as if, when the vote shall be won, there will be no more women's movement. One would have to be very shallow and very insular, too, to think so. And what a tragedy it would be! What! Shall all these sacrifices be made to get the vote and then nothing

be done with it? Shall the vote be at once the record of the progress of women and its grave? The women's movement is world-wide, and whether or no it has taken a political turn depends on the circumstances of each several nation. That it will be of political import some day everywhere is unquestionable to us who believe that it will not die, but that it *is* life and "holds a promise for the race that was not at our rising." A condition of virtuous anarchy may be the highest of all ideals; no one, it is to be imagined, regards government, laws and compulsion as good in themselves; but so long as governments exist, so long are social reforms at their mercy, and no civilisation is internally stable until it has moulded the body politic into harmony with itself. This is not to say that no progress can be made except by law-making; it is to say that the time comes in the development of every civilisation when laws and the administration of social affairs must change to meet the growing needs of the people. It is because British men have in the main acknowledged this, that the history of Great Britain has been in the main a peaceful history.

The women's movement is felt in all departments of life. In the education and training of girls, and, since men are the sons and mates of women, in the education and training of boys; in social, economic, religious and political matters. Custom, opinion and prejudice are as important as legislation; administration of law is sometimes vastly more important than law-making. On all these lines, then,

## 4 FUTURE OF WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

march the women, but not on the old beaten paths. Roadmakers they are, and besides the toil of making the roads, they have not infrequently to endure the harassment of the stones and dirt which are hurled at them by those who are sitting in the old track, and who resent their divergence from it.

In England the intensity of the political struggle is due to the fact that women have made such great advances along the lines of personal and social effort, while the recognition of them within the Constitution is still withheld. Moreover, the causes of this continued exclusion have been of late so merely political, so entirely the result of an artificial party system, that the women who desire enfranchisement for no party reasons at all, but from their consciousness of a deep human need, are exasperated by the pettiness and futility of politicians, who subordinate a great issue of social right and wrong to the miserable party game of recrimination and retaliation, of power and office, of ins and outs. The women who had for forty-six years been steadily building up a majority in the House of Commons, and had kept a majority unbroken for twenty-six years (a feat which can be recorded of no other reform party in parliamentary history), found themselves apparently no nearer the attainment of their object, for the morally insufficient but politically overwhelming reason that their majority was composed of men from all parts of the House.

I do not propose to give the history of the English suffrage movement during the administration of

the last three Parliaments ; to be clear and comprehensible, this would take a considerable volume in itself. I wish only to point out that these women have been driven to throw their energies more and more into a political direction because they have been made to feel that their majority in Parliament would not act until political pressure was put upon them to compel them to act. "I have been a suffragist all my life," was the plaintive wail of the politician ; "what more do you want ?" Well, the women in the movement want the vote, and they are realising more and more, with every year that passes and nothing done, that they must concentrate upon winning the vote. It is hard enough at any time to get measures through Parliament unless there is a party advantage to be made out of them. Conceive how much this difficulty is multiplied when, besides the absence of party support, the reform is urged by women who have the powers of the purse and the press to contend with, and who have not one single vote wherewith to get the vote ! Newspapers are owned, edited and written very largely by men and very largely for men ; even what is known as the Woman's Page has, till recently, been contrived in the interests of tradesmen, for purposes of advertisement. Women are notoriously the poor sex. Even a woman who figures as a rich woman is often merely an *article de luxe* for the man who provides for her, and, though he may hang her neck with jewels, he does not readily give her a cheque for her suffrage society.

## 6 FUTURE OF WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

All the more need, then, for concentration, and the fact that these Englishwomen have, on a very moderate estimate, raised and spent in twelve months a sum of £100,000 in working for the vote alone, may be taken as some evidence of the intensity of their demand and of the wantonness of infliction upon them of further delay and further sacrifice.<sup>1</sup>

I have said that in England women have made great progress on the lines of personal and social effort. There are reactionaries so consistent as to deny that there has been any progress at all, and in almost every direction of change it is possible to find people who think it was bad. The change in the lives of Englishwomen has been so rapid, however, that it stares us all in the face and cries out for recognition. Vainly we wail about the dedicated ways of womanhood, when scarcely a living woman is to be found there.

Much of the great change has been due to deliberate and devoted effort on the part of men as well as women, who, at any rate, thought they were making for progress. The great impulse towards the education of the people which characterised the nineteenth century made a far greater revolution in the lives of women than of men. Not only did

<sup>1</sup> The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies in twelve months raised, at headquarters and among its affiliated societies, £42,000. I have assumed that the Women's Social and Political Union raised as much. It seems likely that if we add together all the other societies (thirty odd), and also reckon the immense amount of money spent in travelling and so forth by voluntary workers, the total of £100,000 is well within the mark.

elementary education put all the young girls of the working class on something like an equality with boys, but the foundation of public day schools and the decisions of Charity Commissioners gave girls of the middle class a chance of education in school subjects, and, what was of at least as much importance, removed them from the hothouse air of the home and the seminary and gave them the discipline of knowing their fellows and finding their level. The great movement for the higher education of girls secured, step by step, their instruction in the universities, their admission to degree examinations and, finally, their admission to degrees in all but the two most conservative universities. Of more recent growth is the inevitable development of post-graduate research among women. All these changes were deliberate and were regarded by those who initiated them as great reforms. So also were the efforts made, largely by the same group of people, to open careers to qualified women. All the world knows of the foundation of the great modern career of sick-nursing; of the more bitter and prolonged struggle of women to be allowed to study medicine and surgery and qualify as practitioners therein; of the gradual introduction of women into State service as clerks, inspectors and commissioners. All these changes had, to a greater or less degree, to be fought for by those who desired them. They represented improvements in the status of women, increase in power, in knowledge and in earnings. People resisted them with more or less tenacity, and

## 8 FUTURE OF WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

used against the reformers the sort of arguments they are still using against further emancipation ; but few can be found now who do not admit that, broadly speaking, they represented improvements. There are, of course, some Orientalists even in England, who think in their hearts that it was a great mistake to teach women to read. But most people now accept the principle that women should have the best education available, and only differ as to what that education should be.

Other vast changes have, however, been made in the lives of women which no women or friends of women consciously strove for, which no one regarded as great reforms, which were, in fact, the unintended and unforeseen results of man's invention and man's commercial and financial enterprise, directed solely towards the increase of purchaseable commodities and the manipulation of these in markets ; not by any means directed towards the improvement of the lives of women and the home, towards the easing of labour, or the increase of beauty, peace and health. With the introduction of machinery there came the usual talk about its lightening the lot of the worker and so forth, but when one reads the history of the first factories, of child-labour and monstrous hours of work, inhuman and foul conditions and vast fortunes made in a few months by exploitation and speculation, one is forced to recognise that the passing of work out of the home, and of the woman into the factory was accomplished without thought of social consequences, and that, of



all creatures on earth, the women were the most helpless to resist this change, had they wished to do so.

These, then, are the two great classes of revolution that have come over the lives of Englishwomen during the past hundred years. One blind, unintended, inexorable, whether for good or evil; the other fought and striven for with the highest idealism and devotion. Both wrong and disastrous in the eyes of some. Both, whether right or wrong, accomplishments, hard facts, which the sociologist must meet and either repeal or amend. The one thing he must not do is idly to bewail the revolution and refuse either to adapt persons to conditions or conditions to persons.

Pathetic people lament the disappearance of the woman of a hundred years ago, and some reproach the present generation with being rude to its great-grandmother. But surely any great-grandmother of sense would not wish the twentieth-century man to be mated with a nineteenth-century woman. Even regarding women merely as complements to men, it is desirable that the wife should be of the same generation as the husband. And it is nothing short of cruelty to desire to see an early Victorian lady under modern conditions; it would be like nothing so much as the liberation of a cage-bred canary into a flock of ravenous starlings.

The industrial revolution did extraordinary things to women. It drove them out of the shelter and subordination of the home and bluntly told them that they must compete for their lives in the open

market with men. It taught them (a lesson which is hard indeed for women to learn, and which they are only learning very slowly) that only by the combination of individuals can progress be made in a world where no individuals, no loves count, and where there are no considerations but economic considerations. At the same time it gave them wages in hard cash for the work they had hitherto done as parts of the family organism, without wages in cash. These wages, for the most part shamefully inadequate for a human existence, have yet been unconditional and have produced in working women a sense of independence and a desire for "spending money" that, for good or evil, is having an immense effect in the comparison they make in their hearts between wage-earning and non-wage-earning employments. Lastly, the use of political pressure by working men, to further their industrial purposes, has slowly roused working women to desire power to put that same pressure on for their purposes.

All these effects have been slow in emerging and even slower in becoming clear; the aroused interest of more fortunate women has greatly helped in clarifying thought and bringing it to a practical issue. It is sometimes brought up against the suffrage movement that it is a middle-class movement, in the sense that women of education and some leisure were its pioneers. Undoubtedly it was so, in its inception. How could it have been otherwise? It is so no longer and it never was so, in the sense that middle-class women wished to

secure something for themselves from which working women should be excluded; the very reverse was and is true, for, in demanding the franchise for all women on the same terms as men, privileged women are deliberately asking to be allowed to abandon some of their privileges. They are asking that the privileges of social influence which they now possess, and which the charwoman and the factory worker are without, shall be compensated for, to some extent at least, by the granting of a democratic franchise to less privileged women.

The entrance of women into money-earning employments has had two further effects of considerable importance. The Married Women's Property Act was in part a result; for whereas it was plausible to hold that a woman had only a courtesy title to wealth which had been made and given or bequeathed to her by some man, it revolted everyone's sense of fairness that, when a man had said at the altar, "With all my worldly goods I thee endow," he should become entitled to the wages of the charwoman or the copyright of the novelist whom he had married. Another effect was that women began more consciously to compare their work with men's work. So long as men always went out as "bread-winners" and women stayed in the home, it was possible to entertain extravagant notions of the arduousness of a man's toil. Now that women are book-keepers, clerks, doctors and inspectors, they have a measure that they had not formerly, and to many women the peace, order,

simplicity and convenience of office or factory may well have appeared in favourable contrast with the exacting and conflicting claims of the household, run too often with inadequate supplies, shortage of labour and antiquated tools.

Enough has been said in this very hasty survey to show the gigantic changes in the lives of women, the necessity for clear and unprejudiced thinking about those lives, and for a certain courage in experimenting with them. The women are thinking. What are they thinking about? About education and training; about marriage and parentage and prostitution; about custom and opinion and prejudice; about the economic and moral and religious side of all questions; about organisation and agitation, about politics and representation in politics; about laws and the administration of laws.

And the movement is world-wide. I shall speak mainly of the forms it has taken in England. They vary in every country. But the world is now so well in touch that the experience of one country becomes the experience of all, and what women undergo in one country smites the hearts of all women and rouses in them the sense of personal pride, of womanly dignity, of faith in woman's work and soul. The women's movement has brought about a solidarity unmatched by any other, a solidarity which represents a very high ideal of civilisation, a civilisation based upon the law of love and the knowledge of truth. As the president

of the Woman Suffrage Alliance said at Budapest, women feel now that by the degradation of some women, all women are cheapened ; that what is injurious to the human race is wrong, whether it be perpetrated in Chicago, in Singapore or in Brussels.

## CHAPTER II

### WHAT IS THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT ?

“ Ole Uncle S., sez he, ‘ I guess  
It is a fact,’ sez he,  
‘ The surest plan to make a Man  
Is, Think him so, J. B.,  
Ez much ez you or me ! ’ ”

J. R. LOWELL.

**I**T is often said that the women's movement is chaotic, that no one knows whither the modern woman is going, nor even whither she wants to go ; woman is, in fact, adrift, having lost her helm (or perhaps only the helmsman), and is going, full steam, all round the compass.

It is very much easier to make such assertions, at least they sound less preposterous, if one keeps to the rhetorical singular and begs the whole question at issue by assuming that women are one in need, capacity and character, and that this eternal feminine has been once for all dissected, understood and catalogued, and that all variations are merely caprice. But let us drop the singular and we shall see that although women want as many different things as there are different women, there are two things which the women in the movement consciously

desire and strive for beyond all others, and these are knowledge and scope. The women's movement is one to open the doors of the world to women : that they may know the nature of their own bodies (to every mother her workshop), and the bodies of men, their mates, not according to the teaching of the schools and churches, but in the light of modern science ; that they may have in their ranks women who know the condition of law and medicine and affairs ; that the mind and character of women shall be enabled to play upon these matters with knowledge, and shall present to the world the complementary view to that given by the mind and character of men.

In so far as the deepest needs of men and women are one, men suffer as well as women from the ignorance or degradation of women ; a stream cannot rise higher than its source, and men are the sons of women. In so far as the bodies and minds, the lives and experiences of men and women differ, in so far do both men and women suffer, if the specifically feminine character is unilluminated by science, the specifically feminine activity hampered and checked by external law or economic necessity.

In this striving for knowledge and scope the women are in sympathy with the spirit of the time. Scientific men have abandoned the invention of worlds and have betaken themselves to the study of the world presented to them, in most matters except those in which sex plays a part. Here there are still some who talk about " Ideal Woman," or

"Normal Woman," of being unsexed by knowledge and liberty, as if by nature women were unwomanly, and nothing but the stern restraints of darkness and bondage could keep them natural. In asking that these restraints should be removed, women are demanding the only conditions under which any really scientific generalisations can be made about woman's sphere and woman's nature.

As lately as the middle of the nineteenth century, Mrs. Norton wrote :—

"He has made me dream that it was meant for a higher and stronger purpose, that gift which came not from man but from God! It was meant to enable me to rouse the hearts of others, to examine into all the gross injustice of these laws, to ask the nation of gallant gentlemen whose countrywoman I am, for once to hear a woman's pleading on the subject. Not because I deserve more at their hands than other women. Well I know, on the contrary, how many hundreds, infinitely better than I,—more pious, more patient, and less rash under injury,—have watered their bread with tears! My plea to attention is, that in pleading for myself I am able to plead for all these others. Not that my sufferings or my deserts are greater than theirs, but that I combine, with the fact of having suffered wrong, the power to comment on and explain the cause of that wrong, which few women are able to do."

Mrs. Norton knew what was the state of the law, having suffered cruelly from it, and there was, in her day, very little chance of any women knowing the law, except through just such personal bitter



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suffering. Few women, as she truly said, could combine this knowledge with the powers of exposition, agitation and eloquence which so distinguished her. This is less true now than it was then. Progressive women are determined that it shall cease to be true altogether. They are increasingly devoting themselves to studying the complex social system into which they are born and are themselves introducing new lives; they are supplementing the intuitions of motherhood with the reasonings of science; they are finding in the knowledge of racial poisons justification for what has hitherto been simple racial instinct. The defilement or the abuse of marriage by men, which has hitherto been regarded as venial, because the wife and child were property, acquire quite a different colour when women as well as men know the effects upon the race. It is possible to tell devoted ignorant wives that it is their part to endure all and never to refuse. Medical men have kept silence, priests have preached and lawyers have advised submission, and ignorant mothers have handed on these precepts to their daughters. "*La femme est née pour souffrir,*" says one mother of daughters; and the more woman suffers, the more truly womanly she is. "*Entbehren sollst du,*" quotes the anti-suffragist,—to women only,—and sacrifice, *quâ* sacrifice, has been made the woman's idol. But when she gets to know that the sacrifice is depriving her of motherhood or poisoning the children to come, how then? Will she be so much in love with sacrifice? Can anyone

believe that a woman will retain the old attitude towards marriage after she has learnt the causes of many of the congenital diseases of children, or of what are ironically termed "diseases of women"? Whatever the view of enlightened women will be (and I decline altogether to prophesy), of one thing we may be quite certain, their view will be prodigiously changed by the light.

Women will not only obscurely feel, they will know; when they know, there is no power on earth that can prevent them from acting. The only question is whether they shall act freely, or whether their informed energy shall be thwarted, diverted and suppressed to the point of explosiveness and to the embitterment of their lives and characters. In Great Britain, at the present time, this question is acute; but it is being put all the world over, and different nations are answering it in different ways, and finding it amazingly difficult to learn from each other's experience. Do we not even find English people prophesying direst results if the causes for divorce are made equal as between men and women, and these people are left open-mouthed when informed that in the northern portion of Great Britain they are so? While others declare that the mere notion of a woman being a Member of Parliament, of a jury, or of the police force, must be the cause of inextinguishable laughter, thereby convicting themselves of bad manners towards two European nations and the United States of America.

The wisest among those who educate the young

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are disbelieving in the doctrine of original sin ; they no longer regard education as violently forcing a child into moulds ; they believe that in giving scope for natural energy the teacher is doing almost all that a teacher can profitably do ; they think that as the human race has evolved into two sexes which are indispensable to one another, the better they understand one another the closer will be their sympathy and co-operation with each other, and that, therefore, the segregation of the sexes is bad. The subjection of one sex to the other is also bad, since the slave-owner never can really know the slave, while the knowledge the slave has of her owner is bitter fruit. In the art of medicine, doctors are more and more setting themselves to remove obstructions to health. Even the penal codes of the world are slowly becoming less and less retributive. Women, therefore, are in the direct line of progressive thought when they demand that their vital force shall not be circumscribed and shackled, but that men shall give them the same scope as they claim for themselves. And progressive women declare that liberty will tend to assuage the war of the sexes, which is as old as the domination of man.

## CHAPTER III

### THE SUBJECTION OF WOMEN

" 'Tis such a tender thoughtfulness ! So exquisite a care !  
Not to pile on our fair shoulders what we do not wish to bear !  
But, oh, most generous brother ! let us look a little more—  
Have we women always wanted what you gave to us before ? "

CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN.

I HAVE said that the women who are in the movement are craving two things, knowledge and scope. Many of those who are obstructing the movement are loud in their professions that they, too, want women to know more—about "womanly" matters ; that they, too, desire that women should be allowed to do—what they are "fit" for. And when the inquirer asks what is womanly, and who is to be the arbiter, the reactionary replies, with a pitying smile, that it is surely not necessary at this period in the world's history to ask what is womanly, and that the inquirer is rather perverse than honest ; that human nature is the same all the world over, and much more particularly female human nature ; that wise men down all the ages have written books showing that women are instinctive rather than logical, governed by the emotions, devoted to the individual and

regardless of the whole, incapable of concerted action; and that these properties of woman, at any rate of normal woman, are specially devised by Nature for the making of good mothers and for nothing else, and that, moreover, the burden of motherhood which Nature has imposed upon women is so great that they have, or should have, no time or capacity for anything outside the exercise of that function.

I wish to declare at the outset that in my opinion any speculations about women, any schemes for their education and their life-conditions which do not take into account the fact that they alone can be the mothers of the race, are thereby rendered worthless and foolish. We have not to consider one generation only; even if some philosophers desire to do so, and if individuals here and there, as they do and always will, achieve it, the greatest of all impulses will drive to reproduction, and the strongest of all desires, after those for self-preservation and self-fulfilment (and frequently even before these), will be the desire of re-living in the children and re-living better than now. I use the word re-living not to mean that there is any survival of the conscious personality of the individual in successive generations, but to suggest the imaginative and purely altruistic contemplation of future generations which shall reap where we have sown; this, I believe, is one of the deepest and purest of those motive forces which lie beyond explanation or

justification. And when I have said this is my opinion, I wish to add that in a large and varied experience of the so-called feminist movement, in England and abroad, I have found the importance of motherhood more fully understood and more religiously proclaimed by the women in the movement than by any other women. That they are in revolt against much that law and custom have laid upon motherhood is undoubted ; also that they understand motherhood in a far wider sense than the vulgar one, and that they do not regard it as a specialised or vocational affair. It has been customary to divide female humans into women and mothers ; this is altogether false. Women should not be trained to be mothers ; to do so at once introduces all sorts of arbitrary limitations and restrictions and hampers the very mission it is designed to serve. Women should be trained to be whole human beings ; the measure of a woman's motherhood, like the measure of her love, is the measure of her whole nature. Cramp her nature, limit her activities, and you cramp and limit her love and her motherhood.

Of course the reactionary replies that we are demanding for women more than men have. That, if women have this great burden of motherhood, which men have not, the rest of the load must be lightened in proportion. We may all heartily agree that the load should be lightened, but who is to decide upon that portion of it from which women are to be exempt ? Men only ? Do we

not find that reactionaries describe as a burden and a care what progressives regard as a tool or a weapon? There are people now, who, knowing that men have thought the franchise of such supreme importance that they have rioted and fought and died during centuries of the world's history for the right to choose who should be their rulers, yet assert that to give women an equal share in that choice would be to impose a fresh burden upon them! In effect these people claim that women do their work better when it is left to men to decide what that work shall be and under what conditions it shall be performed; that, although woman is the guardian of the race, and bears the burden of motherhood, it is still to be left to man to dictate the terms of motherhood.

To us, on the other hand, it seems that no distinction of race or class is so fundamental and ineradicable as the distinction of sex. Breeds may be mixed, a rich man may become poor, or a poor man rich; a man may begin life as an employed person, and end it as an employer, or *vice versa*; alone from the cradle to the grave, man is man and woman is woman. When I insist on this I do not overlook all the interesting and as yet unproven speculations that are made as to the varying degrees of maleness and femaleness that there may be in different individuals, nor do I subscribe to the endless cocksure generalisings upon sexual variation (for until we can separate acquired

from inherited characteristics, we shall never get very far); I am content to base the essential differences between men and women upon the known fact that their share in reproduction is different and produces difference of life, needs and temperament. How is it possible then, more peculiarly in sex-relations, for men alone wisely to prescribe to women?

For example. Because willingness to sacrifice is one of the attributes of motherhood, it is too often assumed that the sacrifice of the woman must be for the good of the race. Nature gives to each child two parents; man in his wisdom makes the laws which assign one only, mother or father, as may be most expedient for him,—never both,—and when he discusses racial problems, he is very apt to attribute any shortcomings to the woman, who “has only one task to perform and performs that badly.” He forgets that the child may inherit not only personal qualities but racial poisons from the father as from the mother, and that the liberty he denies the woman in sexual relations (giving as his reason the sacredness of the home and the family) has too often been used by him to the great damage of the race. He forgets, too, that whereas fatherhood is voluntary, motherhood by far too often is not. He adds laws to laws, dealing with factories and workshops, and leaves the mother’s factory—the home—to take its chance in the *sauve-qui-peut* of industrialism. In Great Britain he contrives a National Health Insurance



Act and leaves out altogether from its compulsory provisions the health of the mother in the home, except for maternity benefit. In this same Insurance Act he arranges that the maidens shall pay for the widows, and the women shall pay for the unmarried mothers. And when death has removed the one parent whom the law allows, public provision and private charity alike have seldom any consolation to offer the widow who has lost her dearest, but to remove from her motherly care all or some of the children left to her (now undisputed) ownership. All these cruelties and absurdities are possible because of the subjection of women.

Reactionaries on the women's question may be divided into sentimental and brutal reactionaries. The sentimentalists declare (very often in the same breath) that women are not in subjection, and that they like being in subjection, that progress lies along the lines of specialisation, and that women should not "interfere" with men's work. Women, they aver, are not inferior to men, but true economy is shown by increased division of labour: man's to command, woman's to obey. There is to be a specialisation in the virtues, too. "Can we ever have," asks Mr. Frederic Harrison pathetically, "too much sympathy, generosity, tenderness and purity? Can self-devotion, long-suffering and affection ever be a drug in the market? Can our homes ever be too cheerful, too refined, too sweet and affectionate? And is it degrading the sex of

woman to dedicate her specially to this task? " <sup>1</sup>  
 (To me it seems "degrading the sex" of man to suggest that he has no need to practise all these fine qualities, but that he will practise them vicariously through woman, who is to be dedicated specially to them.) The sentimentalists suggest that this willing service women have for centuries rendered to men, and been happy and good. The bold bad feminists have wantonly stirred up revolt, and peace and happiness will only return when they have been routed and the "awful rule and right supremacy" of man re-established.

I think we may dismiss without much argument the assertion that women are not in subjection, and indeed, sooner or later, the reactionary always gets tripped up on this ground. It is not possible to study our social institutions without coming to the conclusion that they are the result of the subjection of women and that many of them tend to perpetuate that subjection. It is inconceivable that women, of their free and enlightened will, would have chosen this position. That some women are found to maintain that it is not subjection and they like it, is only a proof of the mental and moral effects of subjection upon them. There is a brave spirit which declares that "Stone walls do not a prison make, Nor iron bars a cage," and much of women's work has been done in that spirit. Exceptional women have triumphed over their prison

<sup>1</sup> *Realities and Ideals: The Work of Woman*, by Frederic Harrison, p. 125.

(at what cost the life of the Brontës may show), but the world is not composed of exceptional women, and the mass of women have been degraded by the narrowness and irresponsibility of their lives. One is familiar with the idealistic assertion that no one can injure you except you yourself. It is a fine thing to hold to your sovereign will and force it to command your life, but who can look round on the world as it is and not see everywhere signs of how men and women degrade their fellows by cruelty, carelessness and greed? It sounds like cant to tell the girl and boy who have been reared in a slum and have never known decency that they need not have allowed themselves to be degraded. It sounds like cant to tell a woman she is not in subjection to men's law when this law does not allow that she is the parent of the child she has borne, and when men can at any time, and do, deprive her of the inviolability of her own body and of the right to earn an honest livelihood. No, it is not arguable whether women nearly all over the world (and certainly in England) are in subjection, and I do not intend to argue it. The only questions are, How came they so? Are the causes eternal and irremovable? Would it be well if they were removed?

I confess to a much higher regard for the honest brutalitarian than for the sentimentalist; for the man or woman who says candidly that women are subject to men because they are inferior to men, either physically, or intellectually, or both. Even among these there is a tendency to allow, with a

shrug, the moral superiority of women, and one is left wondering whether this admission shows the greater contempt for women or for morality. But a few thinkers, more robust and far more logical (for a fine morality is not separable from intellectual force) go the whole way and assert that women as a whole are morally inferior to men as a whole. They say women are notoriously less brave and less truthful than men ; their unselfishness is weakness or slavishness, their continence is due to coldness or compulsion. I propose to deal with the physical superiority of men in the next chapter. With regard to their mental and moral superiority, it is an interminable discussion, which is mostly conducted entirely by the light of one's predispositions, and which leads nowhere. There does not seem much that can be profitably said about it except this : that until the incubus of brute force is removed from those who have a smaller share of it, we shall never know what other force they may have. Some of the faults attributed to women are manifestly the faults encouraged by subjection. Men's standards have been applied to women, and it may be that they do not suit women. As barriers have been removed, so many of the old confident assertions about women have evaporated that the scientific mind will suspend judgment for a while. It is quite true that in music, painting, sculpture, poetry, no woman has ever yet attained to the highest that men have attained. It may be that women's lack of genius in the arts is due to some

inferiority of mind, or it may be due to an essential incapacity for or an artificial prohibition of the passionate, concentrated egoism, which alone can produce the greatest works of imagination. The special pleader against women will declare that if they had any capacity at all, it would have shown itself in music and painting, for young ladies have always been encouraged to sing and to play and to sketch. And as for poetry, it is only necessary to have pencil and paper and—genius. As if the kind of parlour tricks that used to be expected of marriageable young ladies had any relation at all to creative art! The eighteenth century or early Victorian parent had a short way with any daughter who wished to take any art seriously. We know how Maria Edgeworth humbly submitted to have her work blue-pencilled by her affectionate but inferior father, how Harriet Martineau suffered from the endless task of shirt-making, how Jane Austen hid her compositions under fancy work, lest visitors should suspect she was that unsexed thing, an artist.

But the whole discussion whether women are mentally inferior to men is indeed impertinent to the practical issue whether or no women should have their lives and work controlled by men. Only by liberty of action and scope for our powers can we develop healthily and harmoniously, and the fact that so much of a woman's life and experience lies altogether outside what a man can experience should surely make men a little diffident about

dictating conditions. The opportunity to develop is not a reward of virtue nor a prize for genius. Women, as well as men, should have the fullest possible opportunities for development, not because they are "equal" to men (a most unfortunate phrase), but because it is good business, socially speaking, to develop all your human as well as your material resources. The developed person will be more useful, more companionable, more reasonable, more happy and more amusing than the undeveloped. And if man be really the intellectual superior of woman, why should he fear her competition?

## CHAPTER IV

### PHYSICAL FORCE

“He will not read her good,  
Or wise, but with the passion Self obscures ;  
Through that old devil of the thousand lures,  
Through that dense hood :

Through terror, through distrust ;  
The greed to touch, to view, to have, to live :  
Through all that makes of him a sensitive ,  
Abhorring dust.”

GEORGE MEREDITH.

I N the last chapter the question was put whether women are intellectually and morally inferior to men, and the conclusion was that this was a question incapable of solution, certainly now, and probably always ; furthermore, that, even if it were answered in the affirmative, this would be no reason for denying to women opportunities for their fullest development. We now come to another sort of superiority, which is capable of proof, which has been proved to demonstration and which of itself accounts perfectly for the subjection of women during the ages of human development in the past. This is, of course, the superiority of men as a whole, over women as a whole, in size, weight and muscle.

It seems doubtful whether, among races where women have the same physical discipline as men, they are any less enduring of fatigue, and there are some hardships, such as shortage of food, broken nights and severe pain, which women seem better adapted to bear than men. Again, of men and women engaged in the same employment, such as the teaching profession—in which no one can say that women have the lighter task, for which women are much less highly paid, and which very rarely represents the whole of the work the woman teacher is expected to get through in the day—the women live longer than the men. The superiority of the male over the female in size, weight and muscle seems the only one established beyond doubt, and as this superiority is seen in most of the animals, there is a strong presumption that it is not entirely due to artificial conditions of feeding, exercise and so forth. The extraordinary increase in the average size of British girls during the last hundred or even fifty years shows, however, that semi-starvation, lack of exercise and of the nervous energy which comes from hope and a purpose in life, were the purely artificial causes of the extreme weakness of the weaker sex during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The experiments that have been made in the reaction-time and relative sensibility of boys and girls, suffer from the circumstance that the subjects experimented upon could not be scientifically treated, and all that the experiments prove is that boys, often fed and always reared



differently from girls, showed slightly quicker reaction-time, and, in a few cases, slightly more developed sensibility. Anyone who has begun to realise the extremely complex causes of good and bad nutrition and its close dependence on mental states will put himself the question whether the confined, thwarted, and monotonous lives of girls have not counted for very much in the imperfect nutrition of their nerves and therefore in their lack of initiative and response.

But now, of this undoubted muscular superiority of men. What has it led to? In early stages of civilisation, Might was Right. A man took what he could and kept it if he could. Nations and governments were founded on the same principle of self-protection and self-aggrandisement, and empires followed. Women did not escape this law of the strongest. In addition to what seems a congenital muscular inferiority, women had the enormous handicap (for fighting purposes) of motherhood. The nine months of gestation and the succeeding period of nourishing and cherishing the infant were, and are, and always will be sufficient reason why women cannot successfully resist men by force. Not infrequently have I heard women, and much more frequently men, say on public platforms that it is not true that women cannot fight; that some women are stronger than some men, and that women are only prevented by men from enrolling in the army and defending their country. This always seems to me the silliest stuff. How could men prevent

women from fighting if women wanted to fight and were as strong as men? If women were as strong as men and as fond of using their strength in fight, and if they desired their enfranchisement, how is it that they have not fought for it and won it long ago? But the women's battle is a far harder one: it is to induce men to give up the primary impulses of animal nature at the command of reason and knowledge; to refrain from taking what they *can* take, from commanding where they can enforce obedience. And this is a battle which was begun ages ago, and in every age has had its victories,—victories due, not to the pitting of physical force against physical force, but, first, to man's deep need of woman, which prevented him from destroying her, as he destroyed all other weaker creatures when he had no use for them, and, second, to the mutual love of man and woman and their common bond in the child. Physical force is a great and vastly important part of the forces wielded by man, but it never has been the only one, and it is increasingly being brought under the dominion and guidance of other forces. Women, too, have their physical force, without which the race would be extinguished; and, in the last resort, if we could imagine the brutality of man contemplating a war *à outrance* against women, their strength would be found to lie, not in the fact that they could conquer men in a physical conflict, but that they could die. For those who can only read what is explicit, I hasten to add that I do not believe such a state

of things could ever arise, although, in a state of war, men show themselves by no means incapable of exterminating the enemy's women.

If we find some of the women's champions a little hazy on this matter, their confusion is as nothing, however, to the muddle-headedness of some of the reactionaries. I have heard one and the same champion of anti-suffragism (calling himself a Churchman, too) speak of the dominance of physical force as a "regrettable fact," do lip-service to the gospel of Jesus, and add that he feared the world was not ready for it yet and probably never would be, and follow this up by the much more fervent and heartfelt declaration that it was "only just and right that men, who alone can enforce the law, should make the law." Now, if it is right and just that physical force should rule, undirected by moral force, it is not a regrettable fact, and we need not seek to alter it. But this is not what anyone really means. Everyone admits that laws should be based upon justice and equity, and that they have no stability if this moral sanction is entirely lacking. Anti-suffragists say that suffragists deny the dominance, sometimes even the very existence of physical force. This is not so. We think, on the contrary, that it is too dominant and that man is sufficiently reasonable to see this, when, as is now happening all over the world, women show that they are not consenting parties to such domination. Mr. Norman Angell has pointed out that the modern pacifist does not deny that nations can wage wars ;

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what he says is that war, at the present time, and between civilised countries, is "bad business." I do not deny that most men could knock most women down ; I say it would be bad business to use this power, and I believe that most civilised men would agree that it would be bad business, that they have no desire to rule women in this way, and that society will be much healthier and happier when men as a whole abandon the practice altogether. And the anti-suffragists who make such statements about men have so low an opinion of them that I am ashamed for them.

Another frequent absurdity of anti-suffrage argument is the assertion that we wish to destroy physical force, and that if we succeed, we shall become the easy prey of other less foolish nations. Now, to wish that physical force shall be controlled by knowledge, intelligence and right is not to desire its destruction ; on the contrary. There is no enemy of health and vigour so subtle and so strong as ignorance and incontinence. It is not love and kindness, temperance, soberness and chastity which sap a nation's strength and make its young men to fail when tested ; it is ignorance, or disregard of nature's laws, the sweating and overcrowding of millions, the slackness and self-indulgence of those whom their more fortunate conditions should have made leaders of men. It is to the interest of men that women should do their work well, and under the dominion of physical force, of fear and compulsion, women can never do their best work.

Women are making great claims : they are not only claiming that the men of their own land shall not govern them by physical force alone, but they are making what, to some quite honest people, seems an outrageous claim,—that they should have a right to an equal share with men in deciding foreign policy and the question of war. They claim this right, because they believe that it would be for the good of the State, and because they think the State owes it to them because they are citizens and not parasites ; because they are doing an absolutely indispensable work and making sacrifices which are at least equal to the sacrifices men make for the safety, honour and welfare of the State. Let us examine into the grounds of this plea.

At an open-air meeting a man approached the speaker with what he evidently regarded as a poser : “ If you get a man’s rights, will you women fulfil a man’s responsibilities ? ” It was a good question to ask at an open-air meeting, where close reasoning is almost impossible, and the answer, “ No,” brought a sneering, “ Ah, I *thought* not ! ” and a round of applause from the youths round the cart, who didn’t look as if they had thought much about even a lad’s responsibilities. The heckler was, of course, begging the question. By talking of “ a man’s rights ” he did not merely mean the rights which a man can now by law exercise ; he implied that a man held these rights by virtue of certain services rendered by him, and that, if women claimed these same rights, they must be prepared to render these

same services. I will deal in a subsequent chapter with the question whether, as a matter of fact, voting rights are, in modern England, dependent upon the military service or upon the physical force of the men who exercise them. For the moment I wish to discuss the ethical and social consequences of asserting that only one kind of service entitles a person to liberty, and that service being the taking of life, women, whose service consists in the giving of life, are not entitled to liberty. "A man's responsibilities!" Let us take them at their very hardest. Let us contemplate the ideal world of the anti-suffragist, where man goes out daily to his toil in the cruel world—

"commits his body  
To painful labour, both by sea and land,  
To watch the night in storms, the day in cold,"

while woman lies "warm at home, secure and safe." He, if fighting is to be done, fights for home and country; she has no more arduous part than to weep, while he is away, and welcome home the victor. But stay! This version of affairs always assumes that the man is the victor. Have not the vanquished wives, too? Study the picture of any war, even the most modern and the most "civilised." Are the women of the vanquished, the invaded country, "secure and safe"? From the tale of the Trojan women to the latest reports of Bulgarian or Servian atrocities, we find all truthful records give the lie to this rosy picture. Men who go to war have the honour and the glory, the

bands and the banners, the stars and medals and monuments and maybe the glorious death. Women die, and see their babies die, but theirs is no glory ; nothing but horror and shame unspeakable, the slaying of those for whom they willingly risked their lives, when they brought them into the world, the destruction of all that is most precious to them. When men go to war, who remain behind to administer affairs, to be father and mother in one ? When the men are killed, are their " responsibilities " killed with them ? When the flower of manhood is destroyed, who are worthy to be the mates of the women and beget the men of the future ?

" The children are tying the sheaves, the women winnow the ear,  
The children are plucking the grapes, the women yoking the steer,  
Doing men's tasks, and thinking men's thoughts, with no time for a tear."

These are only some few of the questions that surge up in a woman's mind when men talk as if war concerned men only. But after all, in a modern civilised state, is war the only thing that counts ? Is soldiering the only national service ? Mr. Kipling's grandiloquent phrase about woman's hindering hand on the warrior's bridle rein makes men and women who are mentally alive smile at its ludicrous inappropriateness to the greater part of life as we live it. And if we admit that, fighting being a man's business, the details of how best to fight are properly left to men to determine, can we

refuse to admit that, childbearing and rearing being a woman's business, the details of how to bear and rear children are properly left to women to determine? And if the amount of freedom persons possess depends on the amount of service they render to the State (a principle which, as I have shown in Chapter II., I do not admit), how can anyone say that the service of killing the enemy in offensive or defensive war is a greater service than the provision of the human material for killing or being killed by the enemy? Suffering and sacrifice are immeasurable things, and it would be a bold man who would assert that the sufferings and sacrifices of men in warfare were, in modern states, equal to those of women in the giving and nurture of life. Indeed, this discussion, like so many others raised by people finding reasons for clinging to the past, is about as futile as the discussion which of two millstones grinds most corn. Yet one parting recommendation I would like to offer, before leaving this particular aspect. It is to advise the reactionaries that they would be on safer ground if they shifted man's claim to superiority from his military to his economic qualifications. For we can conceive, and an increasing number of people are contemplating with eager hope, a world in the far-off future that will not contain one soldier; but no one anticipates that this world will ever arrive at a state in which there will be no mothers.

In conclusion, I wish to disclaim altogether the kind of assumption that one frequently finds implicit



in much of the feminist talk of the present day—the assumption that men have been the barbarians who loved physical force, and that women alone were civilised and civilising. There are no signs of this in literature or history. If men have enjoyed fighting, and gloried in bloodshed, as many still do, that is because their blood was hot within them, and the women of their age and race loved them for it. The experiences of men and women have each made for civilisation, and women have not the man's obvious temptation with fists to try conclusions, since they are for the most part foregone conclusions. If motherhood has been for much in the education of the race, so have science and the love of the arts and beauty. Agriculture, manufacture, commerce, even finance have engaged men's hearts, and more often than not turned them from war. War is waste and the women's movement may be taken as the type of all the great conflicts there have been between coercion and development, bullying and understanding, love and hate. What has been good in war has been the life-forces, the energy, the joy that men have put into it. They are finding other conflicts than those with their fellow-men, into which they can put these forces, and the women's movement, in part the cause, is also in great measure the effect of the disappearance of barbarism.

## CHAPTER V

### DEMOCRACY AND REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

“ Did you, too, O friend, suppose Democracy was only for elections, for politics, or for a party name ? I say Democracy is only of use there that it may pass on and come to its flower and fruits in manners, in the highest forms of interaction between men and their beliefs—in Religion, Literature, Colleges and Schools—Democracy in all public and private life.”—WALT WHITMAN, *Democratic Vistas*.

REFERENCE has been made to the half-heartedness of the school of physical force. While asserting loudly that physical force rules and always will rule the world, these people become very indignant if they are accused of immorality, or even of unmorality. Few have the moral courage to declare themselves unmoral, and the physical force apologists for the domination of man over woman always proceed to argue that this domination is not merely a “ regrettable fact,” but is all for the best. They argue that men as well as women possess a moral nature (which is undeniable), and that they will direct their physical force in accordance with their moral nature, which is, in public affairs, superior to that of women. I

have already touched upon the lack of foundation for this assertion of superiority. There is too little ascertained fact and far too much speculation and assertion on this point. Mr. Frederic Harrison (whose connection with Positivism has done little to modify his profoundly unscientific temperament) has published some essays on the women's movement, in which he picks out certain ugly characteristics common to humanity and attributes them to women only. He professes such a respect for women, such admiration for their moral, spiritual and even intellectual qualities, that one really wonders how it comes that he thinks it necessary to scold them so much. He sees them acting in politics with "that spite and untruthfulness which is too often the failing of some good women," showing "a rancour, an injustice towards persons, a bitterness of temper, which cause them to fling away common sense, fairness, truth and even decency." Dear, dear! How bad these good women are, and who would have supposed that this passage was written by a philosopher who holds that women are, "as a sex," morally superior to men? One would have supposed that to have accused good women of lying, spite, folly, injustice, rancour and indecency was not to leave much over to hurl at the bad ones. But he proceeds to say that it is woman's very possession of higher qualities which makes her political judgments "untrustworthy and unstable." One seems to have heard something very like this in the course of the Dreyfus

case, when it became a reproach to be "intellectual." But if these are the characteristics of women, according to Mr. Harrison, we may smile to see how he gives himself away, unintentionally, when he comes to those of men. He has just been alluding to the "fair, impartial temper" with which men "habitually weigh all sides of a question," and declaring that "all political questions and all parliamentary elections really turn, or ought to turn, on nicely balanced judgments"; yet when he comes to anticipate what would be the effect of women's enfranchisement upon the judicial mind, the fair impartial temper of men, he declares that it would weaken men's respect for women's opinion and even their respect for women: "*The women's vote would always be actually or possibly on the wrong side.*" (Italics mine.) The conversation of the wolf with the lamb in La Fontaine's fable is an admirable expression of this state of mind, but to call it "fair and impartial" throws a queer light on Mr. Harrison's own particular quality of male mind. He alludes pathetically to the sufferings men have endured at the hands of women when men have felt it their duty to oppose something women desired. It is a pity when rancour and spite manifest themselves, but have women never suffered at the hands of men? How about the witch trials? Did men make the path of Joan of Arc, of Josephine Butler, of Doctor Jex-Blake, even of Florence Nightingale a path of roses? Are not suffragists even now having all sorts of preposterous

views and disastrous vices attributed to them? And is there one of us that has not been pelted with mud and refuse from the hands of a man (save the mark)? One murmurs "Marconi," one glances at the Balkans, and wonders if women could really improve on the language that has been used by men of each other in political controversy.

We have had enough of this irrelevant talk about the inferiority of women. Do we replace it by equally foolish assertions of the inferiority of men? Not a bit of it. We base the women's demand for a share in government on precisely the same grounds as those on which men have based their demands. The difficulties we all find in acting for others are, broadly speaking, of two kinds. There is the difficulty of understanding the lives of others as completely as we understand our own, and there is the fact that our own affairs have a motive force which the affairs of others have not. Only people desperately driven to excuse themselves could pretend that men, any more than women, are unaffected by these difficulties, and Professor Dicey, whose unsentimental mind revolts from cant, has frankly admitted as much. "Under a representative government," he writes,<sup>1</sup> "any considerable body of persons who are not represented in Parliament is exposed, at best, to neglect. In a country such as England the views of the unrepresented are overlooked far less through selfishness than through the stupidity

<sup>1</sup> *Letters to a Friend on Votes for Women*, by A. V. Dicey, K.C., LL.D., Hon. D.C.L.

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or preoccupation of the voters and their representatives. . . . Nor can any impartial critic maintain that, even at the present day, the desires of women, about matters in which they are vitally concerned, obtain from Parliament all the attention they deserve. . . . Despotism is none the less trying because it may be dictated by philanthropy, and the benevolence of workmen which protects women from overwork is not quite above suspicion when it coincides with the desire of artisans to protect themselves from female competition." No suffragist could put the argument better than this candid anti-suffragist.

How is it possible for a man to assert that he knows what a woman feels and wants as well as she herself? He would have to be more than man! Even women, who spend their lives in studying men, do not make the claim that they can feel a man's passions as he can; and, in another mood, the man who claims to be the arbiter of a woman's life will rail at her incomprehensible and fickle nature. "But women have tongues and know only too well how to use them! We may consult with women and be advised by them," say the reactionaries. "Yes. And also you may not," is the reply. Professor Dicey makes much of the distinction between civil, as distinct from political, rights. He speaks of reconciling his "enthusiasm for everything which promotes the personal freedom and education of women with the strenuous denial to them of any share in sovereign power." But the male electorate is not all so enlightened as Professor Dicey, and

civil rights depend upon political rights. Men less intelligent, less sympathetic than Professor Dicey are absorbed in their own affairs, and women have had to fight and are still having to fight for every miserable concession in personal freedom and education (and in such fights Professor Dicey has often been on the women's side), and they have no security that they will be allowed to hold what they have won. Successive Local Government Acts have shown plainly how men will almost unconsciously sweep away the rights of women when their minds are concentrated on some reform for which men care. The Married Women's Property and the Custody of Children Acts repealed cruel and unjust disabilities which had been imposed by men upon women. Are we to suppose that all injustices are of the past, and that from henceforth for evermore men will feel like women ?

Besides the difference in relative values which men and women place upon things, and the vast gulf that there is between actually experiencing and only listening to an experience, there is the fact that even when people know what is right, they do not always do it without some external pressure, whether of public opinion, legal rights or political power. In truth, the reactionaries are too thin-skinned when they wail about the sex-antagonism of women who frankly declare this weakness in men. If we asserted it of men only they would have some right to complain. But we do not. The very existence of customs and laws and govern-

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ments proves that men believe humanity needs these motives in addition to moral ones, and, unless you are an anarchist, you must agree that they do. When men get altogether away from women they forget women. It is natural. Therefore women, who suffer from being forgotten when their lives are at stake, require that men shall not in future be able to get altogether away from them when they are employed in governing them, as they do now in Parliament. Mr. Harrison gives us an interesting and touching little bit of information when he says, "To speak the truth, I only know one woman whom I would always trust to come to a right decision"; but this fact has really no general interest or value, and even if women did not, on the whole, represent the views of Mr. Harrison, this would not prevent them from representing their own, which is what matters in representative government. Mr. Harrison becomes appealing when he says, "Now I say frankly that I do not trust the average woman to decide these complex issues"; because that is just how *we* feel! *We* do not trust the average man to decide these complex issues. A fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind, and perhaps when Mr. Harrison has grasped this feeling of ours, he will see that the proper thing is for neither man nor woman to attempt to decide these complex issues alone.

We have only to consider the very different lives women lead, leaving out of account the debatable differences in nature, to see how impossible it is



for a man to look on life with a woman's eyes. To begin with, as long as he insists on being absolute master, there is the unbridgeable gulf between those who command and those who obey, and the tendency of this "division of labour" (as the reactionaries humorously call it) to result in making men conceive it is theirs to think and act and woman's to feel. "Men must work and women must weep" is perhaps the most fatuous expression in all literature of this attitude. Men are rich and women are poor. Men are employers and women are employed. Wage-earning men think mainly of wages, women are more concerned with prices. Men enjoy fighting for its own sake, women only suffer from fighting. Men's part in parentage involves only the satisfaction of passion and appetite; women's part may involve these, but it also involves much suffering and long care. It follows from the apportionment of men's and women's work and interests that in the main men will be more concerned for property and women more concerned for the person, and our laws and administration amply bear this out. It follows also that men will spend money upon the things they care most about, and starve the things they care less about. We see millions lavished on war and destruction, on monuments of stone and iron, on pomp and circumstance: we see health wasted, human creatures neglected, education slighted. The titles and the honours go to those who make money and take life. "Things are

in the saddle," says Emerson, "and ride mankind."

Those who defend the male franchise declare confidently that in England "the family is the unit," and that the voter casts his vote after a balanced judgment of the interests of the family as a whole. This is, of course, entirely without foundation. The vote is *not* given to the family when the head of the family happens to be a woman ; the vote is *not* refused to a man when he has no family ; several votes are given to one man, although legally he cannot have several families. So that, even if, for the sake of argument, we allow that husband and wife are one, and that one is the husband, we still have a very large number of votes which represent men only, and those men bachelors. The evils of this in such a country as England are patent ; in such a country as South Africa they are greater still. There the bachelor vote is unstable and indifferent to the permanent interests of the people, for the adventurous bachelor comes for what he can find, to make money, not a home ; to take his pleasure where he can find it, among the women of an alien race, and leave in his track the degradation of sexual ethics, the embitterment of racial hatred, the burden of a fatherless race of half-breeds. All these ills fall upon the voteless women of South Africa, and are felt in their rebound by the English women at home.

The possession, by the people, of the parliamentary vote does not make a democracy. Many

other things are necessary for that. But the vote is a piece of the machinery of democracy without which it cannot work, and it is lamentable to hear men who call themselves Liberals, and who use all the old catchwords of the democratic party, refusing to apply their Liberalism to women and bringing against the enfranchisement of women all the ragged old arguments which used to be brought against men's enfranchisement and which are ragged from the shot wherewith the old reformers riddled them. "Men know better than women what is good for women!" Yes, and the slave-owner knew what was good for his slaves; and the employer knew what was good for his employees; and the landlord knew what was good for his tenants! But the slave and the employee and the tenant did not think so then, and no one dares say so now. The women's day is coming too, and the people of the future will deride those Liberals of the early twentieth century who talked of the Will of the People and forgot the mothers; who boasted of their intention to enfranchise every person "of full age and competent understanding" and left out half the people; who declared that "citizenship" should be the basis of voting rights and denied these rights to all women, thereby admitting (what the women had been rebuked for asserting) that Britons, when they happened to be female Britons, *were* slaves. No external defeats could have so sapped the prestige of the political Liberal party as the fact that it failed altogether,

as a party, to recognise the force and the progressive idealism of the women's movement. There is now in England no movement that can compare in vigour, intelligence and devotion with the women's movement. When the Liberal party acknowledges this and identifies itself with the movement, it will once more step into the line of progress; until then it is true to say that the progressive women and the Labour party which supports them are the only democrats. Moreover, the penalty of supporting reaction in one direction is that the logic of events drives men into the logic of thought. Many a Liberal who hoped he could restrict his illiberalism to women, is finding himself forced into general principles of reaction which will sooner or later—horrible to contemplate!—overwhelm men too.

On the other hand, the effect upon women of the agitation for the vote has been enlarging beyond even the most sanguine expectations. I myself have seen women of the middle class, who began by desiring the vote from a personal and quite legitimate sense of their own worth and claims, led, from a sense of justice, to entertain the claims of other less fortunate women, and by degrees find their desire redoubled on behalf of these women, whose needs, experience and sympathy gradually demonstrated as far exceeding their own. No less remarkable is the enlargement of the lives of these less fortunate women, by the growth of sympathy and understanding between the different classes

and by the linking up of public and private duties and aims. "Since she's been a suffragist," I have heard a man say, "my wife has seemed to take more interest in the home. It hasn't taken her thoughts off; it has only made her think more." And I have heard a middle-aged woman use the pathetic phrase, "Since I began to think," meaning, "Since I joined the suffrage movement."

Is it all unmixed good, then? Is the women's movement singular in this, that it is perfect? Will women make no mistakes? By no means. Who could be so foolish as to think so? But by mistakes we learn. If you wish to learn a new language you must blunder in it first. One of the reasons of women's slow development is that men are so afraid women will make fools of themselves. We all have a divine right to make fools of ourselves, because the force that created us decreed that only so could we learn, and the convention by which a woman is never allowed to be a fool all to herself, as an individual, but is made to sin for her whole sex, is an anti-progressive convention which must go. A woman fires a building and we are told "Woman" has disgraced herself, "She" is unfit for the vote. But men sack empires and burn cities to the ground and no one says "Man" has disgraced himself, "He" is unfit for the vote.

I think I hear the horror-stricken Anti declare, "A right to make a fool of yourself? But it is *our* Empire that you are asking for,—to play with! Our Empire which we made ourselves and which is

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so complex, so delicate, so nicely poised, that one push from a foolish woman's little finger will send it reeling to destruction." The Anti wants to make our flesh creep ; but it refuses. We don't for a moment admit that the Empire, with its millions of men and women, belongs to men any more than it belongs to women. We can't believe, either, that the Empire is in so shockingly delicate a condition as the Antis make out. The cry is for safety. Only Death is safe.

" Permanence hangs by the grave ;  
Sits by the grave green-grassed,  
On the roll of the heaved grave-mound."

Life is never safe, yet the happy warrior prefers life. The Empire was certainly not made by people who chattered of safety and permanence, nor will it be kept by such people.

The direction in which reactionaries anticipate most trouble is one where I believe it would be last to show itself. It is in foreign affairs, in the relations with other countries, in the issues of peace and war that they see most danger, if women shared responsibility with men. I do not believe it, because for one thing these matters are exceedingly remote from the electorate, and in the vague way in which popular sentiment makes itself felt it is highly improbable that women's sentiment would on any particular issue differ from men's. It is difficult to conceive of Englishwomen loving Germans while Englishmen were burning to cut their throats. What is possible is that women may gradually help men to

see what very bad business war is, simply because it is obviously and always such bad business for women, and while undoubtedly some men trade in war, no women do. The idea is freely expressed that men would resent women having power to control the forces of the army and navy, when women cannot themselves serve in the army and navy. It does not seem clear why they should, for they do not seem to resent women helping to control the police force, although women do not serve in the police. In this latter case the matter comes much more closely home to everyday life and yet we have no trouble. Sometimes the difficulty is put in another way. We in England, it is asserted, may be willing that women should share in the control of their own lives, but if we allow this, we shall lose the respect of more "virile" countries. But the "feminisation" of politics (to use their phrase) will not give the country one man less, nor will it make one man weaker or less virile. If really the respect of other countries depends upon the amount of our physical force, that force will still be there, undiminished, and in course of time, as we fervently believe, through better and humaner conditions, will be greatly increased. We do not find the Scandinavian races nor our Australian cousins to be particularly womanish, yet Norway and Australia have given all their women the vote.

My theme hitherto has been that the domination of physical force has been the cause of the subjection of women, and that it is contrary to progress and

civilisation that physical force should dominate moral and intellectual force. But, of course, physical force has never been entirely dominant, otherwise the mind of man never would have emerged from the mind of the beast. All progress is due to the growth of mind controlling physical forces, and the anti-suffragists who assert that the vote has been and is merely the counter which represents the physical force of the voters, and that no one would dream of obeying a law if he once suspected that it were not made by those who possessed the preponderance of physical force, are making an assertion which not only reflects quite undeservedly on the intelligence of men, but which is patently contrary to facts. Things may be bad ; they might be much better ; but physical force, in this crude sense, never has entirely ruled the world since prehistoric times. The idea at the back of the anti-suffragist contention is, as far as one can make it out, that you cannot compel a man to do a thing *against his will*, if he feels that he has the strength to resist. We must admit that. But there are many ways of moving the will besides the crude way of physical force ; there are various kinds of compulsion and various forms of resistance. The Antis at one moment declare the intellectual superiority of men over women, and the next moment involve themselves in a line of argument which presupposes man's entire deafness to reason. Man is, however, gradually discovering that he may get more out of his fellow-man (and *à fortiori* out of



his fellow-woman) by agreement than by compulsion, and the resistance offered by out-and-out striking is only an extreme case of the moral law of diminishing returns upon increased compulsion. It has been found that slave-labour is the least productive labour; it is slowly getting to be believed that overwork means under-production. The degree of physical force used by men against women has not been sufficient at any period to destroy women, but it has crippled them; it has resulted in not getting the best out of them. Though stupid men and blackguards have not understood this, the better sort always have, and the great mass of men have never even dreamed of applying their force to its utmost against women. It is quite true that Government rests on physical force in the sense that Governments dispose of physical force; but those who form the Government are not chosen for their personal possession of physical force, nor even with any thought that they represent the physical force of the community. In a country with representative institutions the Government is supposed to represent the *opinions* and *interests* (not the physical force) of the majority of the electors. Before the modern extensions of the franchise, the country was actually ruled by the votes of men who were few relatively to the whole population, and, therefore, by no means represented the physical force of the community, and before the days of parliamentary government a small oligarchy or even an autocracy ruled. Democratic government

has, in fact, come to birth and steadily grown with the steady decline of the rule of physical force. And it will be seen that this must be so, when once we have grasped the fact that the unmoral use of physical force may here and there profit an individual but is always bad business for the community.

If we abandon the visions of the Antis, we shall see that, as a matter of prosaic fact, the vote in England is given to a man not as a reward of virtue (as the assertion, "woman has disgraced herself," would seem to imply), nor as a prize for intellectual ability (as those who speak slightly of women's intellect would suggest), nor as the guerdon of physical prowess (as the physical force party declare), nor does it depend upon his being a husband and father. An Englishman who has, by debauchery, ruined body, mind and spirit, and who has neither wife nor child, may yet have the necessary qualifications to vote, for these are a confused and illogical jumble of accretions, but, such as they are, they depend on the possession of property. It is proposed by Liberals to abolish these and to enfranchise a man in virtue of his manhood. Once you see the immorality, the waste and the stupidity of the physical force argument, there is no possible ground for refusing to enfranchise a woman in virtue of her womanhood.

## CHAPTER VI

### VOTES

Who made the law thet hurts, John,  
    *Heads I win,—ditto tails?*  
“ J. B. ” was on his shirts, John,  
Unless my memory fails.  
    Ole Uncle S., sez he, “ I guess  
    (I’m good at thet),” sez he,  
    “ Thet sauce for goose ain’t *jest* the juice  
    For ganders with J. B.,  
    No more than you or me.”

J. R. LOWELL.

WE come now to the question, what is the use of the vote, about which women are making such a bobbery? Not more bobbery, be it well understood, than men have made; not nearly as much, if we are to take as a measure the amount of suffering that men have been willing to inflict and the crimes they were willing to perpetrate in pursuit of the franchise.

We exaggerate the *use* of the vote, say the Antis. Well, even if it is possible to exaggerate the use of the vote, it is scarcely possible to exaggerate the significance of the continued denial of the vote. To the awakened, organised, articulate women who are demanding the vote, the shifts and excuses

and dodges of politicians, the exhibitions of mob spirit and the revelations of passions and motives usually hidden have been startling. Women, whose private lives were fortunate, have been taught that they were living in a fool's paradise concerning the lives of other women. The sight of woman-baiting by a mob of her political masters; the listening to debates in the House of Commons; above all, the arguments used by anti-suffragists have made women infinitely keener and more conscious of their position than they were before. Many of these things have been as startling as a blow in the face. The letter of Sir Almroth Wright, the verses published by Mr. Rudyard Kipling under the title, *The Female of the Species*, the animus of Mr. Belfort Bax and the vulgarities and shallows of Mr. Harold Owen and the *Anti-Suffrage Review* must have converted thousands of men and women who before had refused to believe that such views were at the back of the opposition to women's enfranchisement.

But do we exaggerate the value of the vote? People often talk as if the vote were only of use for making more and more laws, and ascribe to women the desire to "make men good by Act of Parliament." They forget that votes may also be of use to resist and to modify legislation; that, through Parliament, attention is called to the administration of public affairs; that Bills are capable of amendment, if the electors will be keen and united enough for their amendment; above all, that Parliament raises money by taxation of women

as well as of men, and that Parliament alone decides how this money shall be spent. Three million women and nine million men profit by the Insurance Act. Is this not sufficient commentary on the assertion that a woman's chief business is to mind the baby and that men protect her in that business ? The only medical care that she gets from the Insurance Act (barring maternity benefit) is when she refuses to mind the baby or has no baby to mind.

There are two ways in which the possession of the vote will benefit women : first, by raising their status, and, second, by giving them power to influence Parliament directly through their representatives. The matter of status seems to me by far the more important of the two, but because it is intangible, people with no imagination cannot grasp it. Yet men from the days of ancient Greece and Rome to now have very passionately clung to the badge of citizenship. We find magistrates now in England adjusting their sentences so as to avoid adding the humiliation of disfranchisement to other penalties of the law ; we find Parliament debating earnestly how relief may be given to poor men without involving them in pauperisation, which means the loss of the vote ; we remember how Members of Parliament pleaded for the coloured man in South Africa that " the intolerable slur of disfranchisement " should not be cast upon him, and we note with burning indignation that these Members are quite placidly content that this intolerable slur should remain upon their own mothers and wives.

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It is only an idea. Yet ideas have moved the world, and this idea that women are not born to be the slaves of men has rankled for ages ; now that it has found expression, it rankles no longer, it has become an inspiration to millions of lives, not only of women but of men too.

As to the direct use of the vote in affecting legislation, it is quite ludicrous to find people denying it. Like any other tool, the vote is only of use if the owners use it, and that men have made bad or insufficient use of the vote only shows that men may do so ; it does not show that men always will do so, nor does it show that women ever will. Now there is one idea that always seems to crop up in the minds of politicians when any women's problem is presented to them : it is, to prohibit. As Miss Gore-Booth has remarked, politicians of the type of Mr. John Burns cry out periodically, "Go and see what the women are doing and tell them not to !" It is always done, ostensibly, in the interests of the mothers and their children, but women know that what the mothers want is the means and freedom to do their work, not prohibition. What is the matter with the poor is their poverty, says Mr. Shaw. What is the matter with the mothers is their poverty and the ignorance that comes out of poverty. Remove the poverty and the ignorance and you will have done vastly more to check the infant death-rate and the manufacture of unemployables than you will by prohibiting all the mothers in the land from earning (not from working ! No

one ever proposes really to relieve them from toil !) and putting them absolutely into the power of men.

The influence of the women's vote would be felt by no means only at election times. In the countries where it exists it has not so much affected the balance of parties ; that is to say, it has not had just that element of fighting that so interests the sensation lover and that is so fundamentally contrary to real progress. There has been no apparent opposition of interests and no sex-war, but politics have been peacefully penetrated by the women's point of view. Women without the vote can do something to form public opinion ; but women with the vote will find public opinion far easier to move. Acts of Parliament do not spring full-grown from the minds of politicians ; we see how different interests are at work moulding them, before they are even presented as Bills, and it is the voters who are listened to, the voters whom the Minister in charge addresses and persuades and treats with, the voters whose amendments are first taken. I do not deny that politicians do sometimes consult women, but what women ? Some say they consult their own wives ; who selected these wives, and for what qualities ? It is farcical, when democracy insists that men shall choose their own rulers, to tell women that they get the equivalent when men choose what and how many women they will "consult." Voting women may be expected to influence Bills both in their introduction and in their passage through Parliament. Members have

repeatedly stated that they could have voted for certain amendments or measures if they had felt that they owed their seat in Parliament in part to the votes of women who favoured these measures. A member represents only his constituents, and in the long-run he votes in accordance with the views of his constituents. If he does not, it is their fault for electing him.

There are, moreover, the indirect effects of the possession of the vote. The politician who is also a statesman should know that Acts of Parliament only work well with the intelligent co-operation of the people. Who can expect the women to co-operate intelligently in working Acts about which they were never consulted, and which no one ever takes the trouble to explain to them? Men say they were never consulted about the Insurance Act. But it was their own fault if they allowed themselves to be overridden. The women could not help themselves. In addition to the certainty of better co-operation, there is the increased sense of responsibility, the stimulus to thought and organisation, the fact that politicians and reformers all concentrate on educating the voter or the potential voter. We all know the candidate who will only answer questions from electors, and any woman who has not been permitted to ask her own question, but has been compelled to put men up to ask it, knows with what pathetic ease such men are fobbed off. Men are not educated in women's questions as they should be, and the women them-



selves are not educated and independent. In his fine speech in the House on 6th May 1913, Mr. Ramsay Macdonald said: "I share the opinion of those who say that the mere granting of the votes to women would not directly increase wages, and so on. But the difficulty we have got is that when we try to increase women's wages there is a sort of subordinate frame of mind in which women approach all these points. They are careless. They will not organise. They will not take pains and trouble to look after themselves. What is the reason? The reason is that they have always been accustomed to shuffle responsibility for their own actions upon somebody else's shoulders. The very argument which the Prime Minister used this afternoon, that we were doing so well for women, was the most humiliating argument that any Liberal could use against such a reform as we are asking for. We want women to do these things for themselves, because they can do them a great deal better than men can do them. We want to get them into the frame of mind of independent and self-respecting citizens who will co-operate with us, and not merely ask us to do things for them, when they can do them much better for themselves. What would happen if the franchise were given would be this: Women would take a far keener interest in such questions as wages, a far keener interest in their place in the factory or workshop. Women as enfranchised citizens would join the unions, would make their economic demands with far more advantage, with

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far more spirit, with a much more rigid backbone than they do now. Up would go wages as an indirect consequence of the vote having been given to them." So we come back to status after all as the most important of all the effects of enfranchisement. I hope to return later on to this matter of low status, and show how it has been responsible for other evils than political evils.

Many opponents of women's suffrage are really anti-suffragists in a far wider sense than they will admit; the arguments which many of them use are arguments against the franchise altogether. But if the anti-suffragist happens to be a candidate for Parliament, he dare not speak his mind about the existing male electors, lest they should not return, to represent them, a man who expresses so frank a contempt for them; he does not, therefore, express it. But some of the women anti-suffragists do, and we may learn a good deal from them as to the hidden sentiments of the men like-minded with them. One of the fallacies into which they most frequently drop is the confusion between legislating and electing legislators. They become eloquent about the disaster that would follow if women voters decided matters of foreign policy and high finance, and some cheap fun is made at the notion of the charwoman negotiating a loan, and the society beauty delimiting a frontier. But the male voters do not perform these functions, and the women voters would not be called upon to do so. The strongest argument against the Referendum

is that the great mass of the people cannot and never will be fit to judge of matters requiring specialisation, nor to conduct negotiations requiring secrecy and despatch. Popular election means that the people chooses its rulers, chooses those—whom it should then trust—who shall carry out in detail the policy whose broad lines the people approve. Free press, free speech, open debates are the safeguards and opportunities for criticism and revision, but not for legislation and administration, which are the functions of governments and not of electors. There is no system conceivable that will work if the people will not work it. Men, unfortunately, are to be found who expend their ingenuity in discovering how best they can make representative institutions unworkable, and these men are by no means on one side of the House only. A great deal of the preposterous machinery of Parliament has been set up to circumvent the wreckers, who are, in practice, whatever they may call themselves, anti-democratic. But no machinery can take the place of common sense. It is the belief of the progressives that women have at least as much common sense as men, and that they have proved themselves far better diplomatists, perhaps because they have never had the same temptations as men to rely upon physical force as an "argument."

The conclusion is, that to be without representation in a country professedly governed by representative institutions, is to be perilously near to a

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state of slavery. If women were given the vote, England would be a better place, not because women are better than men, but because conduct is not right or wrong independently of its effects, and the effects of slavery are bad both for slave and for owner.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE ECONOMIC PROBLEM

#### (I) THE WAGE-EARNER

“And here I’ll fling the pillow, there the bolster,  
This way the coverlet, another way the sheets :  
Ay, and amid this hurly, I intend,  
That all is done in reverent care of her ;  
And, in conclusion, she shall watch all night ;  
And, if she chance to nod, I’ll rail and brawl,  
And with the clamour keep her still awake.  
This is a way to kill a wife with kindness.”

*The Taming of the Shrew*, iv. i.

THE day of the rule of man’s physical force over women is over in what are called the civilised countries—a relative term ! There are, of course, very many unacknowledged relics of it, but they are disappearing, partly through the growth of reason, partly through the insistent hammering of the women and their men champions. But there is another source of dominance of man over woman, more insidious, more penetrating, much more difficult to abolish : this is the dominance of man by economic force.

It is difficult to believe in the intellectual honesty of those feminists who declare that women must

fight men on an equality in the economic world. I have read articles insisting that women must not only bear the child, but make provision for the child, unaided by men, either individually or collectively. Such proposals depend on the evolution of a race of Superwomen unlike any the world has seen, and no one has demonstrated, or even suggested, how such a race is to be formed. The women who dream these dreams are very attractive visionaries, but I do not propose to follow them into their Utopia, for the reason that I am more interested in the world of reality. In this world of reality, we must face the fact that women, for every child they bear in health and strength, are made less capable of producing exchange value (called wealth), and that not only motherhood, but potential motherhood, affects and always will affect the market value of a woman's work. The people who do not admit this are exceedingly few ; but those who do admit it are sharply divided in their views as to how the resultant evils are to be met, and even those who believe most earnestly in the women's movement, differ in their solutions of the economic problem. Yet the economic slavery of women is worse and more difficult to deal with than any other slavery, and it cannot be met by machinery only ; it must be met by a change of heart, a change as needful in women themselves as in men. Women must have pride and belief in themselves and their work, and men must leave off applying to women a cash standard wholly in-

appropriate to that part of the community whose work is so largely work for the future.

I have preferred to begin with this statement of the women's economic handicap, because I find the great and ineluctable weight of it more often underrated by women in the movement than by those I have called reactionaries. The queer thing is, that the reactionaries who make such play with the burden of woman, are those who propose to pile on to the necessary burden of the child the totally unnecessary additional burdens of ignorance and lack of training, and a thousand restrictions of law and custom, while still making no serious attempt to remove all necessity for earning. Analogies are often misleading, but, in modern England, the picture is fairly correct which shows woman with a baby at her breast, one hand tied behind her by trade and legal restrictions, her eyes closed with the bandage of ignorance, her mouth gagged by the refusal of voting rights, hampered by the skirt of custom, having to struggle over the same rock-encumbered ground as man, unburdened, with head erect and limbs free.

Women are notoriously paid less than men, and the reactionaries are very fond of giving us a somewhat superfluous lesson in elementary economics, to account for these lower wages. They say that wages depend on the demand for, and supply of, labour, and that these depend on the amount of skill required, the pleasantness and healthiness of the work, the amount and the cost of training for

it, and so forth. They say that women's work is less efficient than men's, partly on account of their essential inferiority (one instance of this being their greater liability to sickness), and partly because of their expectation of matrimony, which makes their work less constant and makes their parents less willing to expend money in training them. Finally, they say that women have other sources of income than their labour, and that their wages being supplemented from these sources, they are able and willing to take lower wages than men, able and willing in many cases to accept wages upon which one woman cannot live. These sources are twofold : their male relations partly keep them, so that their wage is only a pocket-money wage ; or other men partly keep them, in return for their favours.

With the exception of the somewhat sweeping assertions about the essential inferiority of women's work, I am prepared to admit all these statements as being manifestly in accordance with facts as they are. This does not increase my enthusiasm for facts as they are ; on the contrary, it makes me cast about for means of changing them, and some of them seem to be already in course of rapid change. As for the greater incidence of sickness among women making their work less valuable, it would be interesting to inquire how much of that sickness is due to the low standard of living, caused by low wages : by overwork from having to do housework and needlework when the day's wage-work is done, by poor food, lack of rational pleasures, and the



depression of knowing that, however hard they work, there is no future before them ; a woman cannot rise. There is another cause of depression, in the nature of the "dependents" a woman generally has. A man's "dependents" mostly include a wife, who nurses and looks after him, and children, in whom he can have hope and pride. A woman's dependents are the crippled husband, the old mother, the invalid sister for whom there is no hope. When a woman falls sick, there is frequently no one to give her the little comforts and help which may prevent the sickness from becoming serious. It is more than doubtful whether women's greater liability to sickness is not simply the result of conditions too hard and depressing for the health of anyone, man or woman. Perhaps men would break down far sooner than women, under the strain of a life as joyless as that which most women are expected to endure.

Of the essential inferiority of women's work, I will only say that, except in the matter of muscular power, it is entirely unproven. Many employers prefer women, saying they are quieter, cleaner, more sober, more trustworthy, than men ; others disagree. The willingness of parents to allow time and money for the training of their girls is being considerably modified, and it is in the power of public opinion to modify it much further. The liability of women to marry and pass out of wage-earning is a drawback which will always exist to some extent, but which would be greatly reduced by better

organisation. The existence of a class of pocket-money workers has been very much exaggerated, and there is no reason why women should not, by judicious combination, practically eliminate this peculiarly obnoxious type of blackleg. The supplementing of wages by prostitution is a more difficult problem, to which I will return in a later chapter.

Are there no other causes for women's low wages ? Let us see. Demand and Supply regulate wages, they say. Then anything that tends to restrict the field of labour wherein a group of persons may compete, lowers the wages of that group of persons. So long as by law women cannot be lawyers, chartered accountants, or clergymen of the Church of England ; so long as, by administrative action, women are excluded from all the well-paid posts in the Civil Service, and married women tied out from teaching and the post office ; so long as, by custom and the action of men's trade unions, women are either directly refused admission into trades or indirectly refused by being denied apprenticeship ; so long as all these artificial restrictions of women's labour exist, will the supply of women's labour in other directions be artificially increased and their wages lowered.

So at the present day it is by no means true to say that wages are determined by Supply and Demand acting without restriction ; Supply and Demand are artificially affected by all sorts of forces, not least of these being political forces, which have

established fair wages clauses for men in Government employ, and are establishing trade-boards for many of the sweated industries in which women were the victims. We abandoned the principle of *laissez-faire* some half a century ago, and most of us have no desire to return to it, for under a system of absolutely free industrial competition, women must go under. But what we do desire is that protection shall be given to women in ways that will help them and not in ways that hinder them, and that wage-earning employments shall not be taken away from them without any equivalent. Experience has shown that men alone cannot be trusted to judge of women's employment fairly. A gentleman is shocked to see a woman with her face covered with coal dust ; but it is healthier to have coal dust on your face than cotton or lead dust in your lungs. They do not like to see a woman tip a coal waggon with a twist of her loins ; they do not watch the overdone mother of a family carrying water up and down steep stairs on the eve of her confinement or a week or two after it. Three times has Parliament been invited to put a stop to the employment of women at the pit-brow, all for their good, of course. And the reason given is that it is bad for their health. The country was scoured to find a doctor or a nurse who would give evidence of cases of strain or injury, but all they found was evidence that consumptive girls from the cotton mills became robust and healthy at the pit-brow. The climax of absurdity was reached when

gentlemen of the House of Commons pleaded that the women ought to be protected from hearing the bad language of the colliers. As if these same colliers spoke, in the home, quite a different, and only a parliamentary, language! And as if, when you come to think of it, a man's right to swear were a more precious thing than a woman's right to work! The fact is that, in this instance, as in many others, the work was to be taken away from the women because some men wanted it, and they were not ashamed to use their political power to try to filch the work from the women, though they were ashamed to own up to the reason. Their intention was thwarted, because there were men in Parliament and out who refused to be convinced by the pretension that the restriction was for the women's good, and because the women made a tremendous fuss, came up to London, held meetings of protest, and roused the country and the press. But this was the third battle over this one position; and why should women be called upon to defend their right to earn their livelihood in honest, necessary labour? If women were to demand legislation to prohibit men from following the "unmanly" and "unhealthy" occupation of selling sarsenet over a counter, or writing accounts in a book, and "taking the bread out of the mouths of the women," there would be more to be said for it than there has been for many restrictions men have made on women's work.

What the women in the movement want is the

opening up of trades and professions to women. We should then find what women could do, and it would be unnecessary to prohibit them from doing what they could not do. If, further, a living wage were insisted on, those who did the work best, whether men or women, would be employed, and those who were not worth a living wage to any employer would drop out of employment and be dealt with by the State. It is bad business for man to treat woman as a competitor in the labour market, whom he will grind down and grind out altogether if he can. A sweated and degraded womanhood is as great a danger to the community as a sweated and degraded manhood.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE ECONOMIC PROBLEM

#### (2) THE MOTHER

“In the dark womb where I began  
My mother’s life made me a man ;  
Through all the months of human birth  
Her beauty fed my common earth ;  
I cannot see, nor breathe, nor stir,  
But through the death of some of her.”

JOHN MASEFIELD.

THE neglected motherhood of England cried out for attention, and it is getting attention with a vengeance. A veritable Babel is being raised on the subject of mothers. Progressive women are all for more recognition and support of motherhood, but the difference between the reactionaries and them is that they hold the first thing necessary, to give intelligent support and recognition, is the liberation of the mother from all the antiquated rubbish of coverture law and from some of the worst results of economic servitude. Else indeed may women find that they have only exchanged King Log for King Stork. While King Log is reigning, little is done for the mothers directly by the State. Women, when they marry, are merged into their

husbands, who hold them as property, and have towards them certain legal responsibilities, of a nature somewhat analogous to those they have towards other living and sentient pieces of property, The State has always dimly known that in the quality of its citizens lay its true and lasting wealth ; but penal laws, which used actually to mutilate men and women, and which still tend to reduce their vitality and to drive them to imbecility and madness, are plain witnesses of how imperfectly this truth has been grasped. Improvements in these respects are, however, on the way. This is said to be the age of the child, and through the child it is becoming also the age of the mother.

In England, at the present day, a working man has almost absolute power over his wife. That he uses this power in the main as humanely as he does, is a proof of how much better men are than the laws which they make or tolerate, and of how much real affection there is between men and women. The fact remains that, especially among working people, where the woman can have no money of her own unless she is in a position to earn it, the husband has the most awful powers of inflicting torture and wretchedness upon his whole family, and that it is distinctly safer for a working woman not to be married to the man she lives with. That working women so greatly prefer being married, again shows how strong in them is idealism and the love of social order. What may an Englishman do with his wife ? His physical

force is supported by law as regards his "marital rights." He can insist on his wife's faithfulness to him, while using complete licence himself. He is supposed to maintain her in accordance with his station in life, but if he fails, it is very difficult for her to find redress. She can pledge his credit if he has any, but it may be refused, and she can then only get maintenance from him by leaving him and taking the children with her and throwing herself on the rates. The Parish will then take action, not for the sake of the woman or her children, but to save the rates ! That is to say, she must become a pauper before she can get what he is supposed by law to give her. Even when the law has given her a maintenance order, the recovery of the money is made vastly difficult and precarious, and if the husband absconds, it is no one's business to find him, unless, again, the woman becomes a pauper.

What would men say of a law which only allowed them to recover their debts on the same terms ?

The husband can prevent his wife from earning, and he can claim any money she saves out of the housekeeping. He can bring up the children as he pleases, and control them even after his death, by will. He can leave the whole of his property as he pleases, even if it has been accumulated by the joint-work of his wife and himself, and if by doing so he leaves her and her children destitute. If he is wilfully idle and refuses to maintain her, she can "have the law of him," and send him



to prison : much good that does her ! The latitude allowed by the law in the matter of personal chastisement of the wife has been a byword ever since *Truth* published its weekly list. I have read this list on and off for over twenty years and I see no change. One week is very like another. Flogging a wife till she is covered with bruises, driving her out of the house on a winter's night in her nightgown, kicking her when she is with child, and other assaults too abominable to mention have been held insufficient to entitle the wife to a separation. I repeat, it is *safer* for the woman to need no separation because she has never tied the knot.

By far the greater number of men do not by any means do what the law allows them, but are kind, toiling and fond husbands and fathers. But even when the father is the best of fellows, it happens in millions of cases that he is not able, under modern conditions, to make adequate provision for his family, and no working men can make adequate provision for the widows and young children they may leave. The State began to make serious provision when it introduced free elementary education. The next step was free meals for the needy, and this was rapidly followed by free medical inspection and treatment of children in schools. All these developments are undoubtedly socialistic, and involve the principle of giving, not according to deserts, but according to needs. And the interesting situation arises that—although we go on

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saying that the man supports his family, and must, therefore, have a much larger wage than the woman—when the State pays for education, food, doctoring, nursing, it does so from the rates, which are paid by women as well as by men. No rate-collector troubles whether his rate is levied on a woman or a man; nor does he inquire whether the woman is supporting a family or no. Our experience of socialistic legislation so far goes to show that male politicians are disposed to say to women, “What’s yours is mine; what’s mine’s my own.” The Insurance Act is perhaps the most flagrant example of this, for by its provisions the State’s weekly twopence goes to nine million men and three million women; it is paid for out of the pockets of the taxpayers, and so is the whole of the cost of administering the Act. Practically all women feel the weight of taxation, yet here the men profit three times as much as the women, and by an extraordinary irony, the women who are selected to be left out of sickness benefit are the very women who are doing the admittedly womanly work of making a home, and nearly all women are left out of unemployment benefit.

It is easy to see how these anomalies arise. It is not by any means easy to provide a remedy for them. One scheme, propounded by Mr. H. G. Wells, and with a few ardent supporters, is the State endowment of motherhood. If this were adopted, the individual man would be relieved of the necessity of providing for his child, and the individual woman would be relieved of her economic

dependence on her husband. There has been markedly little support for this proposal as yet among women in England, although Ellen Key in Sweden is a warm advocate, seeing in it the opportunity of women to do their life-work well. So far as the scheme applies to women who have lost their husbands, there is a considerable measure of approval ; it has sometimes been described as " boarding out children with their mothers," and is, to a very limited and inadequate extent, actually practised by some Poor Law authorities. A small beginning, too, has been made in the maternity benefit, and now that it has been made payable to the mother, it may be considered a true experiment in the direction of endowment.

In the abstract there is a great deal to be said for the notion that, since children are not properly held to be the property of their parents, and since the welfare of the children is the highest interest and the gravest concern of the State, it is the State as a whole that should shoulder the responsibility of the children, and they should not be at the mercy of the vicissitudes of one single life. The women should have the responsibility of bearing and rearing the children, and the men should have the responsibility of providing maintenance for the children and their guardians ; but the men should pool their responsibilities, and, out of taxation levied upon all men, the children and child-bearing women should be supported. In this way it is claimed that the personal relations of men and women would be

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relieved of the economic incubus: the husband would be the woman's mate, but would cease to be necessarily her employer. If she chose to keep his house, that would be a piece of voluntary service, to be paid for by him like other voluntary service; for cooking and cleaning and blacking grates is not a part of motherhood. Under such a system, each sex would really make the contribution characteristic of that sex, and the question of a "family wage" would be solved. A man would be able equitably to claim a higher wage than a woman for the same work, on the ground that, as a man, he was taxed as women were not, for his share of supporting the human family, and the widows and spinsters would cease to be burdened out of their smaller wages with rates and taxes to pay for the unfulfilled duties of men. The proposal has, in fact, so many theoretical advantages that it is curious so few women can be found to look at it favourably. The reactionary would naturally not do so, because all changes are abhorrent to her. The progressive women are, some of them, oppressed by the dreary details in which Mr. Wells has revelled, and by the awful prospects of standardisation and inspection, and red tape. Utopias are always so appalling to all but their creators, and when I read Mr. Wells' enthusiastic description of how his endowed mothers will live, my soul is filled with "an unutterable sense of lamentation and mourning and woe." Is this, I ask myself, an instinct which it would be folly to suppress? Or is it merely that the idea is too new

for me, progressive though I like to think myself ? I don't know.

I cannot agree that there would be anything derogatory to womanhood in the maintenance by men of women whose motherhood prevented them from maintaining themselves. The actuarial standard, of which we heard so much during the debates on the Insurance Bill, is totally inapplicable to mothers. They have a claim on the State and should be proud to make it. Too often, the poor woman trembles to confess that she is with child, and is tempted or even compelled to destroy it unborn. This is an abomination and a most grievous injury to both women and men. But the supporters of the scheme have not yet given a consistent reply to those who ask what is to be done for the mother when the children are grown up. Is she to be pensioned ? It is not enough to say that she can return to wage-earning, for this is generally not true. By marriage she is often compelled to leave the place of her employment, and every year taken from wage-earning makes it more difficult to return to it.

This is a much greater practical difficulty than the fear of over-population which some people raise. People are always in a panic about the birth-rate ; it is always too high for some and too low for others. They suggest that if the endowment of motherhood were instituted, and a man altogether relieved of the individual duty of maintaining his offspring, there would be no limit to

that offspring. It is quite possible that a free womanhood would in itself provide the natural and right limit. Those who talk as if women would deliberately have as many children as possible, so as to go on earning motherhood grants, overlook the fact that at present the women who have the largest families are those who are the least able to support them, and suffer most from having too many. It is a well-established fact that increased comfort and refinement decrease fertility, at the same time that they decrease infant mortality. Furthermore, it might be hoped that the endowment of motherhood might make it possible for many men who now remain single and are a great danger to the community, to marry.

It is not my task, and it would be an impossible one, to say whether the women of the future will develop the family along individualist or socialist lines. That they will not be content with things as they are is one certainty. Another is that they ought to be made free to reform conditions in full consultation and agreement with men. Lady Aberconway has suggested that men should be obliged by law to give their wives a fixed proportion of their incomes, and there appear to be in England more followers of this idea than of the endowment of motherhood. It should certainly be possible for a wife to sue for maintenance, without being compelled to go on the rates, but the fixed payment of wives has very many and very great practical difficulties, and it would not help the

millions of cases where the man's total earnings are inadequate. Many men, even now, give, not a proportion, but practically the whole of their wages to the wife to administer. A fixed proportion of one wage may be enough, and the same proportion of another too little, and a small family may easily be brought up on what would be penury for a large one.

What is urgently needed is, that the problem should be dealt with by men and women not in the spirit of bargaining, or endeavouring each to best the other, but with a single endeavour to do right by one another and by the child. Nature has so arranged matters that the women cannot evade a considerable portion of the burden of parentage. Men can, and not infrequently do, evade the whole of the burden of parentage. Together all good men and women should so contrive their body politic that every child shall have the care and nurture it requires. Hitherto man's outlook as regards marriage has been personal rather than racial. When the inequality of the marriage law with regard to infidelity is objected to, he has, for ages past, explained that he has made infidelity a more serious fault in a woman than in a man, because the result of it in a woman might be that her husband would have to support another man's child. This is so, of course, but it is generally a far less serious injury to the race than the results of a man's infidelity are. It seems to be a law of nature that some of the present must always be sacrificed for

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the future. The woman may have to sacrifice liberty, genius, life itself. Neither can the man with impunity evade his sacrifice. And he may not regard it as a gift or a favour to the woman, for which she must, in return, be subservient. It is his toll to the future, the future of his world as well as hers.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE ECONOMIC PROBLEM

#### (3) THE HOUSEWIFE

O the soap vat is a common thing !  
The pickle-tub is low !  
The loom and wheel have lost their grace  
In falling from the dwelling-place  
To mills where all may go !  
The bread-tray needeth not your love ;  
The wash-tub wide doth roam ;  
Even the oven free may rove ;  
But bow ye down to the Holy Stove,  
The Altar of the Home !

C. P. GILMAN.

**I**N the great majority of households the wife and mother is also the housewife. In the great majority of households this arrangement is the most economical and suitable in every sense. So long as families live each in a separate home there will be a vast amount of domestic work to be done in the home, and a great deal of this work being suited to women's strength and capacities, it seems more appropriate, as well as more economical, that each woman should do the domestic work of her own home, and do it to her liking among her own children and her own possessions, rather than go out and

do another woman's work for wages. Further, a woman who is attending to the needs of young children is perforce a great deal in the home with the children, and therefore it is again economical that whatever work she does, in addition to caring for the children, should be work that can be done in the intervals, and that does not require her to waste time and strength in leaving the home. A large part of the function of child nurture is merely to be there, on guard and for emergencies. The child is both better and happier that is not too much interfered with; that lies kicking and crowing on a mattress, making acquaintance with its toes, and as it grows older, finds its own games and delights, in copying the arts and crafts of its elders. In sickness the whole of the guardian's attention may be taken, but in health it is a fact that a woman can best develop the child by being herself occupied, so long, be it well understood, as the occupation does not take the whole of her attention. Babies must be talked to and sympathised with, and as they grow older the busy guardian must not be so busy that she cannot play their plays with them. The sort of work which occupies the hands and only a portion of the head is obviously the sort of work which is appropriate to the child-minder. A floor can be scrubbed, a grate blacked, bread made, and clothes mended with a baby on a mattress in the room, and a couple of tinies playing shop in a corner. It is not an easy life, and the mother may often feel she "doesn't

know which way to turn " ; but if children were not too many and houses were more convenient, and all housekeeping tools more adequate, and the housekeeping money sufficient, the life of the mother who is also the housewife would be a happy and healthy life ; she could hope to do her work really well, and most women would prefer it to any other.

What are the causes of the present discontents among housewives ? Many indeed. They feel that the woman who is not only bearing and rearing the children, but also buying and cooking and washing and cleaning and mending for the whole family, should have some of that independence which comes from handling the money she has earned and saved. I remember a man at a street-corner meeting once heckling me with the question whether a woman had not all that she required if she had " love an' her keep." He was a candid fellow, and when I asked him whether " love an' his keep " would satisfy *him*, and whether he did not like to have some of the money he had earned as " spending money," to do what he pleased with, go to a football match,—or even make his wife a present,—he laughed and said, " Well it takes a woman to think of such things ! Of course I do,—I never looked at it in that light before." The mother while she is bearing children should be " kept " in health and strength ; the woman who is making wealth by personal services just as much as any other worker, should be paid for her services. If this

is not done, if a woman only gets her keep as any other domestic animal does, it is likely that, in modern times, she will be tempted to go out to work, when it would be better for all concerned that she should stay at home and work. Very often, of course, she is not merely tempted, but forced to go. The result is that we see women with the treble burden of child-bearing, wage-earning out of the home, and housework within the home. Small wonder when each of these is ill-done. The marvel is how well done they often are.

Sometimes, again, by the conditions under which the men choose to work, a monstrous burden is piled upon the housewife. The men who have been most persistent and most successful in obtaining an eight-hour day for themselves, have been those who have laid the heaviest burden upon the women. In the cottage of a miner you will sometimes find men working on each of the three shifts, and one housewife to do for them all. This means four sets of meals (where there are young children as well), and three sets of hot baths, and that condition of things which a good housewife detests more than any other, of never being "tidied up." A canvasser reports how she found a housewife of this class looking so worn out over her ironing that the visitor remarked on it, and the patient housewife replied, "You see, I've not been rightly to bed for a fortnight." It is these men, too, some of them, who were so outraged

at the suggested "indignity" of compulsory baths at the pithead. The freeborn Briton reserves to himself the right to bring his coal dust home to the scrubbed boards and washed pillows of his domestic drudge, and when he secures his eight-hour day, does not dream of employing some other woman to help his wife with her extra shifts, so that she, as well as he, may go "rightly to bed."

Those who are intimate with the lives of poor people know how desperately hard on the women are the quick-coming children and the dreadful inadequacy of the money she gets for housekeeping. The increase in drugging as a preventive is a matter for very serious consideration. It is not only hard work and under-feeding that makes so many of our working women look old at thirty.

The dissatisfaction that is caused by all the defects of housing is purely to the good. It is to be wished that the women would all strike against the vile houses and the antiquated and decrepit implements and arrangements. Unhappily the women, having known no other, are often sunk in indifference. When people criticise the "folly" of teaching girls to cook on convenient stoves and to housekeep under reasonable conditions, because everyone knows they never will have convenient stoves or reasonable conditions, and it will only make them dissatisfied, I for one hail this dissatisfaction as the one star of hope for the housewives of the future. For it is

quite certain that if the women are not dissatisfied, the men never will be, and things will never improve. It is difficult to find the beginning of the vicious circle in which domestic affairs now are. You are no craftsman if you do not take pride and joy in your tools, and is it not mockery to ask the English cottager to take pride in her tools? Think of the crowded condition of the rooms, so that the Sunday clothes must be kept in the parlour, and there is no room whatever for storing perishable food, to say nothing of groceries! Think of the extravagant, ramshackle grates on which these women are expected to cook appetising food, without which the men will go to the public-house! Think of the washing on a wet day! The man gets out of the place as soon as ever he can, and we do not wonder nor blame him. It seems to me indecent to blame the woman if she succumbs to such conditions. When she revolts from them, she ought to have the hearty help and sympathy of every reformer in the land.

So it is not housework that so many women are revolting from. It is largely the horrible conditions under which so much housework has to be done. But it is also this: that it is not wise to put all women under one harrow, and particularly it is foolish to insist on mixing up the notions of motherhood and housewifery into an inextricable tangle. Because, in individual homes in the past the woman who bore the children had to cook and clean and housekeep, it does not follow at all that

this must always be so for ever and ever. Some women who are by no means clever at child nurture, and who detest housewifery, are capable of bearing excellent children, beautiful and strong. It would be to impoverish the race to say such women should not have children (and they and the men who love them would laugh at you if you did). It would be stupid to sacrifice the welfare of the children to the incompetent rearing of such women, and one can only pity the men who have to eat the dinners they cook. Why not admit frankly that women differ, and always will differ? Why try to press them all into the same mould? If a woman has been a highly trained and very competent class-teacher before her marriage, is it wisdom or economy to declare that, after her marriage, she must abandon all her special training, her natural and acquired gifts, and black her husband's boots and cook his dinner? Even if she has babies, is that any reason why she should become a general servant?

Slowly, very slowly, because everything to do with women is so hedged round with fears and tabus of all kinds, there is arising the possibility of co-operative housekeeping and co-operative nurseries. To some intensely individualistic women these will be a terror; they would rather slave themselves to death than have a common kitchen or a common dining-room; and some would not for the world miss one cry of the baby, one clutch of its little grasping hands. Let these women have their babes and their households to themselves;

why not ? But why should the other women not also have what they want, and do what they can ? No one, looking round the world of men and women, can honestly say that men do as a matter of fact choose their wives from the girls who love baby-minding, cooking and cleaning beyond all things. Young men are not thinking about such things at all when courting, and they go for nothing in the sex-attraction a girl possesses. We women, if we have lived a good while, have all known scores of girls left unwed who would have made better mothers and better housekeepers than those who have married, and in some cases " could have married a dozen times " as the saying goes. The fact is that the perfect wife, mother, nurse, teacher and housekeeper is very rarely one person.

Girls are less domesticated now, largely because the development of industry has made them less so. Bread, jams, pickles, candles, hams, yarn, cloth and clothes that used to be made in the home are now made in the factory. It seems to me perfectly clear that by degrees much of the cooking and laundering, even of the poor, will be done on a large scale by those who receive wages for doing it. The discomfort and unhealthiness of laundry work in a small cottage, and the waste of time and fuel in cookery, are manifest to everyone who has ever seen them. There will be a development of the crèche or day nursery in all towns, and eventually those who love the individualist life will find it best in country districts, while the towns will be given over to the



men and women of co-operative and gregarious temperaments.

These developments will, of course, bring with them their characteristic dangers and disadvantages. Neither progress nor stagnation is safe ; but the one is life, the other is death. What is necessary is to face things as they are and not go on eternally pretending that the world is what it is not : that women all have sheltered happy homes, if only they would stay in them ; that it is only idleness or perversity which prevents women from making their own bread (without a suitable oven) and stocking their own jam (without even a shelf to put it on). We have seen enough of the very serious disadvantages of modern industrialism to have a shrewd idea of what the dangers of further development will be, and it would be the wisest thing for sociologists not to attempt to sweep back the tide, but to direct its channels for the future.

The divorce of the producer and the consumer has had many bad effects as well as some good. While people prepared their own food and made their own clothes and furniture, there was a direct personal incentive to make them good. This incentive must be replaced by one as strong, or quality will drop. The modern producer finds it difficult to know what his enormous public wants, and it profits him to assert, by advertisement, that what he makes is what the public wants. The consumer is confused and helpless, disorganised and very open to suggestion. Moreover, the power of finance, of trusts and

combinations, to beat out competitors and to rig the market, acts more often than not in direct opposition to the real interests of the consumer. Hence enormous waste of material wealth, adulteration and shoddy, and the ugliness that comes from bad material and bad workmanship overlaid with vulgar ornament.

The fact is that, like everything else, housewifery is becoming a matter of much greater specialisation on the one hand, and on the other the modern state of affairs requires a modern mind. Collective effort and political action are in these complicated conditions necessary, and the purely individualistic attitude of mind is hopelessly old-fashioned. If woman is to be the housewife of the future, it is the woman of the future and not of the past who must tackle these questions, and men must give the woman of the future her head.

## CHAPTER X

### THE ECONOMIC PROBLEM

#### (4) THE PROSTITUTE

"Jenny, you know the city now.  
A child can tell the tale there, how  
Some things which are not yet enroll'd  
In market lists are bought and sold  
Even till the early Sunday light,  
When Saturday night is market-night  
Everywhere, be it dry or wet,  
And market-night in the Haymarket.

\* \* \* \* \*

Of the same lump (as it is said)  
For honour and dishonour made,  
Two sister vessels. Here is one.

It makes a goblin of the sun."

D. G. ROSSETTI.

WHEN considering the reasons for women's lower wages, reference was made to the fact that women had other sources of income than those derived from their work; and no discussion of the economic position of women would be honest which did not take into account the undoubted fact that women can make more money by the sale of their bodies than in any other way. This may sound an extreme statement, but it is advisedly

made. Kings have given their mistresses titles, and have made their sons peers. How many women have been ennobled for any other services? While a first-class university woman rarely gets a higher salary than five hundred pounds a year, an illiterate courtesan, if she plays her cards well and has luck, may dip her hands into millions. The two cynical volumes of Emil Reich, entitled, *Woman through the Ages*, give proof of those qualities in woman which man has chosen to reward with the highest titles and the greatest riches. Every poor sweated girl knows she can in one night double her week's wage if she chooses. This is a fact. If we do not fearlessly face it, we may as well give up talking about the women's movement, for it will only be play. The clearest knowledge, the closest thinking, are wanted on the part of women and men; hitherto, except for those personally involved either as buyers or sellers, knowledge has been confined to the police (almost entirely occupied with penalising one only of the two parties to the transactions), to doctors and nurses and officials of workhouses and asylums of many sorts, and to a small body of rescue-workers. The list is significant.

It is to be wished that this subject could be approached free from the falseness of sentimentality. It is not possible, nor is it desirable to abolish all feeling when we come to act. Feeling is the property of sentient beings, and actions are not right or wrong quite independently of their effects on feeling. Women do well to feel intensely in

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matters so closely affecting themselves, their sisters, their children and their husbands. We are sometimes told that women must be kept out of dealing with these things, because of their emotionalism : yet is it not the passions and appetites of men which largely create the whole problem, and are we to believe that men, when they come to making laws and regulations, forget their passions and appetites, and become as gods? We all know they do not, and the feeling of women is every bit as respectable and deserving of attention. So we must feel, and we do well to feel, when we come to act ; but when we are studying the facts,—the deeds of men and of women, and their consequences,—it is well to banish feeling for a time, so that we may *know* first.

It has been the easy custom of most men to divide women crudely into good and bad. The good woman is superhuman, and she is a very homogeneous and monotonous sort of person ; the bad woman is subhuman, but often very amusing and attractive. The good woman is put on a pedestal, where she finds life very restricted and dull ; the bad woman is segregated, either literally or metaphorically, into compounds, where the delusion is nursed that she will not infect the good woman, either with her wickedness or her diseases. This is all unreal and tiresome and stupid and harmful enough, but there is little to choose between it and a view of woman which is too often put forward by women themselves, and that is the

view that all women are angels, and so angelic that nothing can corrupt them. We may reverence the soul in every living person, we may keep our faith strong in the miraculous power of recovery, we may humbly own that none of us is entitled to cast a stone, we may even have come to see that stone-throwing has not a reforming influence, and yet, if we are honest, we must admit that there are women who have no personal pride and no reverence for the body : covetous women ; cold women, who do not know the purification of passion ; sensual women, who know only appetite ; lazy women ; vain women ; cowardly women. It is cant to insist that we must reverence such women, any more than we would reverence covetous, cold, sensual, lazy, vain or cowardly men. The life of prostitution tends to encourage all these vices ; that is one of the strongest reasons for hating the life ; but, undoubtedly, some persons have more aptitude for it than others.

The questions we must ask ourselves are : (1) What is prostitution ? (2) Is it an evil ? (3) Is it necessary ? (4) If it is not necessary, how can it be checked or prevented ?

It is not easy to find a definition of prostitution which will be accepted by all. I propose to define it as the yielding up for material advantages only of something which should be given for other purposes. A man prostitutes his pen if he takes money for writing lies ; it is no prostitution if he accepts money for writing what he believes to be

truth. A woman prostitutes her body when she yields it to a man for whom she has no love, in return for money; it is not prostitution if she accepts money from the man she loves. Many other definitions are possible, but if we take this one, we have to admit that there is a vast deal of prostitution within the marriage state, and here, in addition to material advantage, there is often the added sop of social position. Even when not entered into for gain, the marriage is often persisted in for that motive. The effects on men and women and children are bad, but no one has even suggested that reform should be introduced by any methods other than educational ones: to give every girl the means of earning a decent livelihood, so that she is not forced into marriage as into a trade; to encourage reverence for the body and faith in the clean passion of love in both men and women; to create a healthy public opinion in which traffic in the appetites is regarded as repulsive, so that it will be thought as shameful for men to buy as for women to sell gratification; these are the only possible ways of dealing with loveless marriages. What is commonly known as prostitution is, however, carried on outside of marriage, and is promiscuous. It arises from the fact that large numbers of men either have no wife or find one woman insufficient for their gratification.

I have said that there are large numbers. Estimates vary enormously as to what proportion of men resort to prostitutes. More facts are badly

wanted, but the Chicago Vice Commission of 1911, a commission instituted and carried out by the municipality, states that the number of prostitutes in the city *who do nothing else* is approximately 5000. It is impossible even to estimate the number of casual and clandestine prostitutes, but they are certainly many. To arrive at some estimate, the commission takes only the 1012 inmates of certain houses, from whose books it appeared that there was a nightly average of *fifteen men per inmate*,<sup>1</sup> and this gives the total of 5,540,700 visits per year. It does not seem likely that Chicago is singular, and until we have trustworthy evidence to the contrary, these facts form almost the only basis for estimating the extent of these practices.

When we come to the question whether prostitution is an evil, we shall find that some of the consequences are evil in themselves, and some are evil because of the way society treats them. There can be no possible doubt that the practice is of the greatest injury to the health of the women engaged in it. Those who persist in it die young, though here the Chicago Commission suggests there has been exaggeration. The injury to the health of the men might be decreased if there were no disgrace attached to the practice, and if medical advice were always invoked and carefully followed; there would still, however, be considerable risk to the health of the men, even if excess were not added,

<sup>1</sup> *The Social Evil in Chicago*, p. 114.



as a cause of disease. The injury to the health of wives is very grave indeed, and those who will take the trouble to consult such books as *Social Diseases and Marriage*, by Prince A. Morrow, M.D., or *Hygiene and Morality*, by Lavinia L. Dock (Secretary of the International Council of Nurses), will find there justification enough for the statement that prostitution is not only *an* evil, but it is *the* evil which is felt most disastrously by women of all ages and classes. It affects the children, who are afflicted with many ghastly diseases, as a result of their father's conduct; it affects the wives, who, besides the moral suffering they may endure, are frequently rendered barren, and themselves diseased; it affects all women wage-earners and, through them, men wage-earners. Concerning the moral evil, a whole book might and I hope will be written, from a modern standpoint. A great deal of purity-preaching fails because it is out of touch with modern minds. If you want men to have a horror of using a woman merely "as a convenience," if you want women to resent such a use of themselves, you will have to replace semi-savage tabus with science. And this is not to say that religion has nothing to do here. For those who believe in a God who made things must believe He meant us to find out His law. There is a sense in which the sneer of the Pharisee is bare truth, and "this people that knoweth not the law is accursed."

People have called it a "necessary evil," and we shall do well to inquire what they mean by "neces-

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sary," for they generally use it in at least two senses : (1) necessary for the health of men ; (2) a necessary consequence of the evil nature of men and women. It is impossible to believe that, if it is necessary for the health of men, it can also be evil. It is impossible to believe that a state of affairs can be natural in which the health of men can only be secured by the degradation, barrenness, disease and early death of women and children. Prostitution in itself is degrading to both sexes, and cannot be necessary. What people mean is that sexual intercourse is necessary for the health of men, and that if they cannot have enough of it within marriage, it is necessary that they should have it outside marriage. If we regard marriage as a divine institution, it is impossible to believe that a good God would have made it necessary to desecrate this divine institution. If we regard marriage as a human institution, it is for us to adapt it to human needs and so arrange society that men and women should have the intercourse necessary for their health. The truth is that sexual intercourse is as necessary for women as for men, and the opportunity of bearing children just as much part of the wider scope that we desire for women as opportunities for education and wage-earning. Because women have always been in subjection, however, their needs have always been overlooked, and not only law but custom has ignored them.

If one wife were not sufficient for a man, we should recognise the fact and not outlaw the women who

are rendering a service. There are about  $3\frac{1}{8}$  millions of unmarried men over 20 in England. Since we know that a very large proportion of them do not forgo sexual intercourse, this argues an immense discrepancy between our professions with regard to marriage and our performance. If social conditions were altered, should we not find that a large number of women at present unmarried would be willing to enter into relations of love and affection with men, and might not this greatly diminish the "necessity" for prostitutes? We can most of us imagine a state of things infinitely preferable to the present, in which the virginity of some  $3\frac{1}{4}$  millions of women is secured by the holocaust of the remaining quarter of a million, and all the attendant evils and disasters to the rest of humanity. What does the bachelor condition of so many men betoken? That they cannot, or will not undertake marriage. Is it not time that some serious thought were given to finding out what is wrong with marriage, or with women, or with men, or with all three?

But when "necessary" is used to signify the "necessary consequence of evil human nature," there is some truth in that; if we add, "and of evil human institutions," we may say that we have got the whole truth. If human nature and human institutions are evil in this direction, can we not alter them? Women certainly will not be content, with their new knowledge and their growing powers, to sit down helpless before these evils. We may be quite certain that they are going to move very

seriously, and it is to the interests of men and of the whole community that there should be sympathy and understanding and co-operation between men and women reformers. Women must beware of allowing themselves to be infected, when they obtain more power, with the brutality which has for ages robbed law of its moral sanctions, or with the legalism which has robbed conduct of the grace of the spirit. The social evil is largely the result of brutality, and brutal punishments are no remedy, even if you can persuade men to inflict them. We do relapse periodically into brutality, such as the introducing of flogging into a recent Act. But it is remarkable that this particular lapse occurred in a measure that had been hung up for a very long time and that was terribly overdue; therefore feeling was exasperated and the measure was finally pushed through on a wave of emotionalism when Members of Parliament scarcely dared oppose the flogging, lest they should be accused of sympathy with the offenders. One could not help feeling that a good many men found, in the easy enactment of flogging, relief from the necessity of thinking out and carrying out the far more difficult and searching reforms which might have some permanent effect. The flogging clause was detestable, both for what it did and for what it prevented being done. It is a matter for regret that women did not oppose it, as women; but brutality has had its effect on them too. If women were admitted to full citizenship there might be more hope that reforms could be

carried gradually and thoughtfully. As it is, women must be excused for seizing any temporary breeze of emotionalism (such as was caused by the death of W. T. Stead) to move on their ship of reform from the doldrums where it lies neglected.

It is not reasonable to say off-hand that legislation can do nothing to diminish the social evil, and a good deal of nonsense is talked about not making men good by Act of Parliament. The causes of prostitution are very many and complex, and though direct repressive legislation has always been worse than useless, because its only effect has been to harry and persecute and degrade still further the unhappy women, yet there are many directions in which legislation could touch the causes.

The movement, now already strongly on the way, for further knowledge is one of the most hopeful of all. Most thinking people are now agreed that children should be taught the nature of their bodies, and respect and care for them, and the only questions are how to give the teaching, by whom and at what age. Adult women, as well as men, should also know something of the pathology of sex, so that they can guard themselves, and so that men may realise more than they do now the fearful suffering which their excesses entail on the innocent. Purity has been preached to boys and men far too much as a vague ideal. If the results of lust appeared to them in their true form of hideous cruelty and cowardice, it would make the most thoughtless pause. Girls must no longer be taught

that subservience and sacrifice to men is woman's virtue ; boys must be taught to take a pride in a woman's pride, achievement and independence. The incredibly mean jealousy of these which we frequently see, has its roots far back in childish days when " only a girl " was a phrase that passed unrebuked by the mother. If a girl has not learned to value herself, to respect her own body and soul, and dedicate them to some worthy purpose, what wonder if she sells for cash that for which she herself has so little value ? The cult of the " womanly " woman is for much in the venality of women. Besides this property of whispering humbleness, she is to be all softness and weakness and yielding grace, and she is to be so unlettered and inexperienced that the veriest scoundrel can impose upon her. The law does much to encourage this low status of women, and until women have attained full citizenship, it is not to be wondered at if young men grow up with a slight contempt for them.

The fact that a woman can sell herself tends, as we have seen, to keep women's wages down, and the temptation to add to her income is increased by the low wages. This is a vicious circle, from which escape can only be made by raising wages, since you cannot directly stop prostitution. The fact that men will probably always be richer than women, and that men very much desire women, will perhaps always prevent the total disappearance of prostitution, but at least we know

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that if we make it possible for every woman to live decently, there will be an immense reduction. It is in the highest degree unlikely that there are many women who would deliberately choose the horrible life. They drift, fall and are pushed into it and then cannot get out. One hears stories of actual starvation leading to it. These may be true, but there are far more cases (and this is proved by the fact that domestic servants and daughters at home form the largest classes of recruits) where the natural love of pleasure and finery, the natural sex attraction, and in many cases aversion from hard or monotonous work have been the temptations. It is an appalling thought that these, which are, at worst, faults and weaknesses, should be seized hold of by men, to make, of what should be a woman—

“A cipher of man’s changeless sum  
Of lust, past, present and to come,”

a creature whom law and society combine to treat as subhuman, a thing, not a person.

Much indiscriminate abuse is hurled by sentimentalists at the mistresses of households who discharge a servant leading an immoral or irregular life, and many most worthy mistresses, feeling acutely their responsibilities for young maids, and knowing of many temptations, endeavour, by severe restrictions, to keep the girls straight. Both seem to me mistaken. Employers of male labour do not keep workmen and pay them good wages when they do their work badly. Especially not

when their delinquencies are voluntary. And the mistress of a household has not only to consider the amount of work she is getting in return for the wages she pays, she has also the grave responsibility of considering all the other inmates of her house, the fellow-servants and her own family, and the effect upon them of the presence, as a member of the household, of a woman of loose character or conduct. It is almost always the best thing for the woman herself to make a change in her life. But when we come to the efforts of so many mistresses to keep their girls straight by denying them pleasure, or prescribing to them the exact kind of pleasure and refusing them liberty, these efforts appear often pathetically misdirected, and only increase the contrast between the girl's actual life and what the tempter promises her. It is natural for a girl, whether she be a servant or a young lady, to "have a young man." The young lady can see her young man as much as she likes, in drawing-rooms and at legitimate entertainments; the servant, too often, can see her young man only by stealth, alone, in the dark roads, on the bench of a park, or in houses where there is little of the control of normal family life. And her interviews with him are full of angry revolt against her mistress's prohibition, and of plots with him as to how to circumvent the tyrant. The said tyrant is often desperately perplexed and anxious, but worse than helpless, because of her ignorance and her sometimes wilful refusal to admit



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the facts of human nature. I have known a woman who said, "I don't allow my girl to go anywhere without me, except to church and to the G.F.S. "; but I had myself met the girl in a variety of other places. Another employer, with two daughters who often went to dances, refused to allow her pretty parlourmaid (who helped to dress the young ladies) to go to a ball which her friends and brothers were attending. The employer thought balls were not good "for that class of person." Another lady, who was constantly seen at dinner parties, theatres and receptions, said, when asked that her servant should be allowed to join a social club, where there was singing and dancing and acting and billiards, "I don't believe you can help that class of people except through religion." Such employers as these, and they are very many, bring into disrepute not only the employment of domestic service, but the whole of the standard of morals which they imagine themselves to be upholding. Young people will have pleasure if they can get it, and to make their lives dreary and lonely is to drive them underground for pleasure and for companionship. The desolate loneliness of many domestic servants, far from home and friends, and with well-meaning, puritanical mistresses, is a cause perhaps quite as effective as service in a disorderly house or with an immoral master. The living-in system is full of difficulties, and I believe it is one of the systems which will have to go; but the only chance of success is

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either to make the girl a part of the family she serves, or to give her opportunities for a cheerful life of her own.

Another contributory cause, whose effect it is very difficult to estimate, is the low state of public opinion, encouraged by the law, with regard to physical brutality. Science recognises the close connection between the lusts of cruelty and of sex. Public opinion must be brought to support far more truly protective law for women and for little children. We hear much just now of the segregation of feeble-minded women, but we need, just as much, the segregation of men who have become a danger to women and children. When women make public opinion much more than they do now, and if only they will steer clear of retaliatory brutality, we shall move much faster.

Again, consider what endless ripples of effects there will be when once we begin seriously to tackle the housing question. What is the use of talking about decency, when a girl or boy has never known it? When the conditions of their daily life from childhood have been such as to make decency and continence things never experienced?

Alcohol taken in excess loosens all the powers of inhibition, and increases the appetites. When by improvements in the living conditions of the masses we have tackled the disease of alcoholism, we shall find we have made some way in other directions too.

It is a frequent easy generalisation that a "bad" woman is much worse than a "bad" man. It is

said that there is always hope for a fallen man and none for a fallen woman. We shall have to be given far more proof of this than we have ever had, before we will believe that it is a property inherent in the sexes. If we must admit that we do not know how much of the virtue of women is due to the severe penalties on vice, we must also admit that we do not know how much of the incurable badness of women is due to these severe penalties ; for society makes it next to impossible for a " fallen " woman to rise, whereas society does not trouble itself even to know whether a man is " fallen " or not. When women think these matters out, they will come to the conclusion that where it takes two to commit an offence, the one who escapes scot-free and attempts to leave the other to bear the double penalty, is perhaps the greater criminal of the two. If two boys steal apples together and A escapes, leaving B to be birched, public opinion is apt to think A rather a mean lad. If, instead of receiving one birching, B were flogged daily for the rest of his life because of A's delinquency, what would public opinion say of A ? or of the wisdom of the schoolmaster ? Prostitution will diminish when it is made possible for women to recover lost ground ; when a silly girl, who has been enticed away by some man watching for her day of weakness, is not treated as a pariah or expected to lead a life of penitential expiation for ever after. The tone which some rescue-workers adopt towards such girls makes one almost despair. It is an unfortunate thing that, owing to the painful

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and distasteful nature of what is called rescue work, so much of it is in the hands of women of a devoted and often exalted temperament, which has almost no points of contact with that of the girl who has drifted into an irregular life. Rescue work should be done by men and women who realise that the appetite for pleasure is not an unhealthy appetite, and that affection and a normal family life are the most hopeful engines of rescue.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE ECONOMIC PROBLEM

#### (5) COMMERCIALISED VICE

“ And many more Destructions played  
In this ghastly masquerade,  
All disguised, even to the eyes,  
Like Bishops, lawyers, peers, or spies.

Last came Anarchy : he rode  
On a white horse, splashed with blood ;  
He was pale even to the lips,  
Like Death in the Apocalypse.

And he wore a kingly crown ;  
And in his grasp a sceptre shone ;  
On his brow this mark I saw—  
‘ I AM GOD, AND KING, AND LAW ! ’ ”

*The Mask of Anarchy*, P. B. SHELLEY.

**E**MIL REICH, writing in 1908, said (*Woman through the Ages*, vol. ii. p. 247): “ The women of the East lie under an adamant yoke of complete severity. It is in the West that the only movement comes, a movement—at its mistaken best—which makes a crusade against prostitution, alcoholism, and war ; all of which must exist as hideous necessities and which, if they could be swept away, would, in their disappearance, utterly upset the balance of

civilisation." On the previous page he has asserted that "the subordination of women is invariably one of the prices of Empire." Many women will also see in the enslavement of women the chief cause of the decay of Empires, and will hold that a civilisation which is balanced on prostitution, alcoholism and war is in a state of unstable equilibrium. They will be confirmed in this belief by the extraordinary state of panic into which Imperialists so often get about the Empire, which is so delicate that it must be sheltered from every breath of popular opinion. A healthy Empire should normally be in a condition of stable equilibrium, to which it returns after any shocks, and there is no manner of doubt that women want to abolish the notoriously rickety three legs of which Dr. Reich was so proud.

In themselves no one is found to recommend these three objects of man's solicitude. Even Dr. Reich calls them "hideous." It is, then, merely the impossibility of abolishing them that we are invited to accept, and it is too much to ask energetic and active women to accept "hideous" things, without ever having been given the chance of abolishing them, or even seriously diminishing them, especially when it is women who bear by far the greater weight of this hideous burden.

Now these three things are in their origin due to human appetites; these appetites have, by indulgence, by stimulation, and by exploitation, become lusts which, far more truly than any reform, do threaten the extinction of the Empires which

are allowing themselves to be eaten up with them. It is with the stimulation and exploitation that this chapter more especially deals. Natural appetite may be gross, may even be brutal, but in simple communities where each individual must rely on his own strength for his own livelihood, it tends to return to a norm which is that of health. Appetite, stimulated with every artifice of advertisement and allurement, exploited by every financial and commercial profiteer, becomes in crowded communities a gnawing ulcer, destroying bone and nerve and tissue, body and soul. To walk the streets and frequent the amusements of any great modern town—London or Vienna or Paris—is to find oneself in the midst of a perfect obsession of the lusts of the flesh. An enormous amount of what passes for art has no design but that of inciting appetite. Music halls and musical comedies, farces, picture-palaces, advertisement posters, repeat the same tedious, banal, hideous assaults. If you are incapable of responding, you are nauseated and bored beyond expression; but it is clear that the jaded nerves of many people can be whipped into response. There are many people who are so flaccid that they invariably succumb to the fixed idea. The profiteer knows this, and the idea is fixed by every device that capital can contrive.

Take the lust of alcoholism. What chance has the feeble will to escape its lure? Have we not given "The Trade" a solidarity which must be the envy of mere purveyors of necessities? (Mr.

Justice Channell said before the Jury Commission that a special jury very often consists half of publicans.) Have we not connected light and entertainment and conviviality with the vice of drunkenness? Have we not refused to allow people even the right to protect themselves against the unwelcome intrusion of the temptation into their neighbourhood? Do not our plays exhibit drunkenness as laughable and lovable in men? (It is significant that they are not so in women.) We have allowed the traffic in alcohol to become a vested interest which controls the lives of the people, and it is to the interest of this traffic that the people should not become sober. Will the traffickers not use their control to prevent the people becoming sober? "You cannot make men and women sober by Act of Parliament?" Perhaps not. Need you give such vast power to those whose profit lies in making men and women drunk?

Take the lust of sex. If alcoholism is stimulated in many ways, it is as nothing compared with the incessant appeals to lust. We all hear of the profits from the drink traffic. We are only beginning to hear of the profits from the traffic in women, which are often closely bound up with the profits of drink. But we must insist on knowing very much more than we do about these profits. The Chicago Commission asserts that in their belief Chicago "is far better proportionately to its population than most of the other large cities of the country," and this statement is based upon a



careful study of fifty-two of the largest cities. In this city of Chicago (with a population of two millions) prostitution, they assert, is a "Commercialised Business of large proportions with tremendous profits of more than fifteen million dollars (over £3,000,000) per year, controlled largely by men, not women. Separate the male exploiter from the problem and we minimise its extent and abate its flagrant outward expression. In addition we check an artificial stimulus which has been given to the *business* so that larger profits may be made by the men exploiters."

A Committee of Fourteen, which made inquiry in New York City, declared: "Some of the profit-sharers must be dispensed with through the force of public opinion or by means of heavy penalties, before the growth of vice can be checked. These include those who profit off the place—the landlord, agent, janitor, amusement dealer, brewer, and furniture dealer; those who profit off the act—the keeper, procurer, druggist, physician, midwife, police officer, and politician; those who profit off the children—employers, procurers, and public service corporations; those who deal in the futures of vice—publishers, manufacturers, and vendors of vicious pictures and articles; those who exploit the unemployed—the employment agent and employers; a group of no less than *nineteen* middlemen, who are profit-sharers in vice." It is evident that if so many people can make a profit, this constitutes a temptation to exploiters, and if the

business could be made unprofitable, it would be greatly reduced. Demand creates supply. Some of the demand comes from the natural lustfulness of men. But this is immensely stimulated by those who make profits, and the supply is secured very largely by fraud and deception, by persistent siege, by the ruining of girls under promise of marriage. In Chicago the average wage of a shop girl is six dollars a week ; it takes at least eight dollars a week to support life there ; the prostitute can make twenty-five dollars a week. Yet even so, she could not be secured in sufficient numbers without the carefully calculated traffic. A prominent social worker in Chicago said in his evidence : " A lot can be done, if we believe that a very large percentage of those who pass through a period of prostitution are capable of climbing upward instead of downward by the momentum of their own better nature. We will have to change our theory about the woman criminal, if we are going to save her. And if the woman is a prostitute, it is only through (1) the uncontrolled passion of youth, and (2) financial stress. To my mind she can fight both of these, but she can't fight those and the added damnation of the saloon and the cool, sagacious business man, who simply stands by and drains her for profit. She could break through the economic dangers and the physical temptations if you will give her a chance, but when you make her fight alcohol and capitalisation, she has no show."

We see from these accounts, then, that the demand

comes from men, and that the supply is largely procured by men for business purposes. In England when a procurer is caught, he or she is sent to jail, but the men who finance the procurer and the men who are her clients are shielded. Who can doubt that when women know these things and are admitted to full citizenship, there will be a change of public opinion all along the lines that feed the supply—economic and educational? The Chicago Commission in apportioning the blame, says: "The Commission has refrained from unnecessary criticism of public officials. Present-day conditions are better in respect to open vice than the city has known in many years. But they are by no means a credit to Chicago. However, this must be remembered, they are not unique in the history of the city. Present-day public officials are no more lax in their handling of the problem than their predecessors for years; as a matter of fact, the regulations respecting flagrant and open prostitution under the present police administration, are more strict in tone, and repressive in execution than have been issued or put in operation for many years. Public opinion has made no united demand for a change in the situation. The Commission feels, therefore, that all public officials who are equally responsible for the present conditions are equally open to criticism. Further, that *the greatest criticism is due the citizens of Chicago* (italics mine), first, for the constant evasion of the problem, second, for their ignorance and indifference to the situation,

and third, for their lack of united effort in demanding a change in the intolerable conditions as they now exist." If ignorance and indifference in the mass of citizens are the ultimate causes, may we not find in the fact that only men are citizens one of the causes of this ignorance and indifference? You can rouse the country on an election cry of "slavery," if it is the slavery of men. The far worse slavery of women is no profitable election cry. Do our anti-suffrage politicians never think of the reason for this? It is a fine commentary on the "Chivalry" of which they prate.

And, lastly, we come to the traffic in war. The recent exposure in Germany of such traffic among armament manufacturers—an international traffic like that in women—has reminded us of the extraordinary folly of allowing private firms to manufacture the actual implements of war. Of course there are many other necessities of war over which it is impossible to have control, but at least the manufacture of warships and guns and ammunition should not be let out of the hands of the government. Here again the sovereign remedy, as in so many other matters, is light, knowledge. When the working man, who is regarded as food for powder, knows in whose interests wars are made, how contrived, financed, and timed, it will not be so easy to catch him with the bait of rhetoric. It will be still less easy to catch women. In the *Labour Leader* of 24th July 1913 there appeared an article giving a list of thirty-five aviation companies,

many of which expect to share in the boom that will be given to the trade by orders from the war-departments of various governments. Here we have a baby industry reposing most of its hopes of profit not on the use men may make of this wonderful discovery for the enlargement of life, but for the spreading of death. Truly it looks as if the glorious inventions of the sovereign mind of man would continue to be accursed until man acknowledges his fellow-sovereign.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE MAN'S WOMAN : WOMANLY

“A woman capable at all points to bear children, to guard them, to teach them, to turn them out strong and healthy citizens of the great world, stands at the farthest remove from the finnikin doll or the meek drudge whom man by a kind of false sexual selection has through many centuries evolved as his ideal.”—EDWARD CARPENTER.

WHAT new contribution have women to offer the world in return for their emancipation? In the women's movement there is a strong feeling that under the influence of the dominant male, women have had to conform to an ideal not their own, and that this forcible compression of all women into one mould—and that a mould not of their own choosing—has been bad for women, and therefore bad for women's work, and in the end bad for men. In order to come to a clearer view of whether this is so or not, I propose in this chapter and the next to treat of the man's woman and the woman's woman. Everybody would probably agree that there is a very great distinction, and that, taking them in the mass, the qualities which women love and admire in women are not the

same as those which, in the past, have most attracted men. This does not matter so much if the conditions of society be such as to make it possible for women to be independent of their attraction of men. But if women are kept dependent upon men for any scope or freedom or joy of life, then there may be imposed upon them an alien standard which may very seriously cripple them. It is unnecessary to labour the point that in sexual relations the qualities which make each sex attractive to the other will always be of importance. What the progressive women deprecate is that all their chances in life should be dependent on sexual charm, and some of them badly crave for a rest from sex, and they desire to be just broadly human.

Generally speaking, the conception of women which is the relic of barbarism is that they are not themselves human beings, but only related to human beings. In his sacred books man has taken care to suggest that woman was an afterthought of the Creator, and that she was "given" to man in a sense in which man was not "given" to woman. He could have her and hold her by force, and what he asked of her were the qualities agreeable to himself. Since every man has been a child and has some slight memories of childhood, the notion of certain motherly qualities being desirable in woman has existed side by side with the notion of other qualities more adapted to adult requirements ; but since memory is faint, and present

desire strong, the motherly qualities in a woman are of secondary attractive force to most men in determining their choice, though, undoubtedly, once mated, a man finds the motherly qualities invaluable. Men write books and poems about the beauty and sacredness of motherhood, but if one looks round the world one lives in, one finds that men are, for the most part, not charmed by the motherly qualities in women, and that the women upon whom men have in the past lavished titles and jewels and wealth are not the motherly type at all. Every woman who has lived long in the world has known many women most richly endowed for motherhood who have not attracted any men worthy to be their mates, and has known other women, with few of the qualities needed for motherhood, who have strung the hearts of a score of men round their necks as trophies. One might make a very good case to show that, in relation to men, there are really three types of women: (1) those who attract men, (2) those by whom men say they are attracted, (3) those by whom men ought (for the greatest happiness of the greatest number) to be attracted.

Ask the average man what he means by a "womanly" woman—take Mr. Austen Chamberlain: "Their qualities which we most admire are their lofty devotion to ideals, *their dependence upon others*, upon husband, or brother, or the hero of their imaginations, *their willingness to yield their opinions*, their almost *passionate desire for self-*



*sacrifice*, often, it must be admitted, on behalf of objects very little worthy of their great devotion " (12th July 1910, Debate on the Second Reading of the Conciliation Bill). He proceeded to declare that these were not "*political* virtues," and added, "God forbid that they should abandon their qualities, which are our pride and theirs!" It seems clear that if women generally are willing to yield their opinions to unworthy persons, it is safer not to give this disastrous tendency much practical scope, but what is really illuminating is Mr. Chamberlain's naïve confession that he *likes* women to be this sort of fools. These are the qualities that are agreeable to himself, provided he can prevent women from exercising their dangerous preference for unworthy objects. One wonders if it has never occurred to Mr. Chamberlain that one reason why women crave direct representation is that they recognise that men are often devoted to women who are "very little worthy," and that when men tell them they "consult women," and we inquire "what women?" we discover that they are not those whom women themselves would consult or trust or follow. There is this foundation at least for the frequent statement that women "do not wish to be ruled by women." They do not wish to be ruled by women who have been selected by men, because they know from experience that a man's woman and a woman's woman are not the same.

If we examine the qualities of Mr. Chamberlain's

womanly woman, we find that they are quite frankly selected for his own satisfaction, and not because they are of any use either to woman herself or to the world. He likes a woman to be dependent on a man; he likes her to give up her own opinions; he likes her to sacrifice herself, even although it be often on unworthy objects. What does the dependence of a woman on a man and her yielding of her opinions to him involve? It involves the misunderstanding and neglect of all the specifically womanly sides of life. The woman who yields her belief to a man, not by conviction, but by submission, is shirking her work, and is a traitor to the future of which she is the guardian. She is, in fact, the *unwomanly* woman, for she has yielded the fruits of her instinct, her knowledge, her experience as a woman, and has adopted, to command, a man's opinion based on man's instinct, knowledge and experience. She is "aping man" and is (what the reactionaries falsely call the progressive woman), in truth, a "feeble imitation."

Dependence of this sort means degradation. There is a sense, of course, in which we are all, of necessity, dependent upon each other, men upon women and women upon men. But the sort of dependence which means that men do all they do for women as grace and favour, but that women do all they do for men from subjection and compulsion,—because they can't help themselves,—is degrading to both men and women. One knows the exquisite delight there is in serving or being served by a

beloved person ; but all women do not love all men, and there is no joy whatever in dependence upon those whom you do not love. Even the pleasure to be derived from dependence on a loved one is a purely personal matter, and varies with individuals and with times, and is not proper matter upon which to base institutions.

As a matter of fact, women down all the ages have escaped from the degradation of entirely becoming faint echoes of men by the lesser degradation of humbugging and lying to men. Men have wanted them to yield their opinions ? Very well, they would pretend to do so. But the true woman never did. She was true to the greater reality of sex. Now women are revolting against the necessity of telling even the lesser lie, and are insisting that they want to do their work unhampered by ignorance and meddling. If we take a large part of women's work as being essentially social, the bearing and rearing of children, education and the care of the human family in all its wide interests of health and morality, how can anyone in their senses assert that a woman who has not the education and culture to know and appreciate facts is as helpful as one who has them ? Yet progressives have had to fight reactionaries for every bit of education and culture. How can anyone think that a woman who suppresses her deep and peculiar knowledge of childhood is as good a mother, teacher, nurse as the woman who bravely follows the light ? Or with the sympathy and insight that women have into sickness of souls and bodies, can

anyone really believe that the world's work of healing and redemption is best done if the fruits of this sympathy and insight are packed into baskets and handed over to men who, with all the other matters about which they are so much keener on their hands, will just forget the baskets and allow the fruits to rot ?

There is in women—no one can doubt it who has studied their works—a peculiar combination of idealism and practicality. The one without the other is either vapid or dry : the two together can move mountains. What distinguished the work of Elizabeth Fry, of Florence Nightingale, of Octavia Hill, of Lady Henry Somerset is just this combination. What makes the reports of the women factory inspectors so much more interesting than those of the men is again the same combination. When men in the House of Commons discuss the Housing Question, or what they call Education, the dulness of the debate is enough to send one to sleep. Why is it so dull ? Because it lacks both actuality and ideality. Once the speakers have lost sight altogether of the child, and can begin to fight each other on the so-called religious question, they are at home, and the House fills ; once they can leave off talking about the houses which are the homes of the people and the workshops of the mothers, and get to quarrelling about some party cry, they begin to revive. The fact is, that anyone worth his or her salt is keen about his or her job. The more you separate your legislative and executive powers from

your intelligence department the more you weaken those powers, and men's legislation and administration is largely divorced from women's intelligence.

When the fight has been made and has been justified by its success, we are all ready to acclaim the fighter, but we seem unable to grasp the principle which the fight ought to have established. Florence Nightingale was invited to go to Scutari by a broad-minded man who had faith in what she could do ; but when she got out there, she found the usual reactionaries, and unless she had insisted upon having a position of undisputed authority, she would have accomplished only a small fraction of her great work. She braved the authorities, and broke open the cases of stores which were sealed with red tape. We are all ready now—probably even Mr. Austen Chamberlain—to acclaim Florence Nightingale as a womanly woman. But where was her “dependence,” her “willingness to yield her opinions” ? And another point is most deserving of note. This is, that when men do get a real live woman, born “to warn, to comfort and command” among them, and have had time to get over the first little shock to their prejudices, they find what an admirable colleague or chief they have gotten, and are generous in their service and co-operation. Men are, in fact, almost always better far than their apologists will allow them to be.

In private life men must have always experienced the value of the strong-natured woman. Only some are still faithless about the value of such

women in public life. They are afraid, afraid for their masculine prerogative, afraid (as I have heard it expressed) that women "will legislate men out of existence." Well, the antidote to that is surely more co-operation between men and women, not less; more knowledge and understanding of each other's point of view, not less. So many men are at present greatly concerned to keep women to their duty; perhaps many women are also too much concerned to keep men to their duty. There is all to be gained by putting together these aspirations for the improvement of—other people!

In an earlier chapter I have shown the danger that there lies in the low status of women in their not having pride in themselves and confidence in their work. The clinging dependence, the softness, the approachableness, the complaisance which men find so attractive in women also have their very great dangers. Women who have devoted themselves to the salving of the wrecks of womanhood know that often it has been this very softness of fibre which has been the cause of a girl's undoing. "Be weak!" men cry; "we love you for it. It makes us feel superior!" And when they have "loved" after their fashion, they leave the human wreckage their "love" has made and pass on to "love" again elsewhere. It is as you love duckling, and cry, "Dilly, Dilly, come and be killed!" Now women are increasingly feeling that it is not womanly to be weak, it is womanly to be strong, strong for work and love and understanding.

The individual man may want individual woman to be weak for him only, but the laws which men together make require women to be strong, not even as women, but as superwomen. Because men have experienced the use of women as individuals, because they still have relics of the old barbaric ownership feeling, they desire still to keep women individual, isolated, unorganised. Now even if a woman, by her mother wit, influence and powers of cajoling and tormenting, may be supposed capable of dealing with her individual man, the situation becomes very different when man begins to band himself together with man in guilds, unions, corporations, parties and armies. He can then proceed to crush women by his organisations. The individual appeal of love and family is powerless against the impersonality of law, the combination of millions of persons all of one sex. It is curious to note that, though men have been organising themselves for centuries, and for the most part rigidly excluding women from their organisations, yet women have not complained, nor suggested that this was "anti-woman"; on the contrary, they have universally done what they could to help the men's organisations. But now that women are beginning to organise themselves, there is raised here and there and everywhere the alarm cry of "Anti-man!" and sentimental appeals are made to women which are totally inappropriate in this connection.

Mr. Harold Owen falls into this mistake when he

says (*Woman Adrift*, p. 234): "The relations between man and woman are not political or even social, they are personal in the highest degree, and in a kind that exists in no other relation of life whatever." Such a mistake, like another of which mention has already been made, is only possible by the use of the rhetorical singular, and even then it does not follow that, because *a* man and *a* woman may have personal relations, there are not social and political matters of the greatest moment involved in those relations. That there are, man has acknowledged ages back, by making laws to regulate the relations of men and women. We know that a woman has no personal relations at all with the millions of men who govern the world she has to live in, and we resent the misplaced appeal to sentiment of a personal kind in such a connection. Social, political, racial sentiment there may be, but personal sentiment can only exist between individuals, and all sentiment is not good either,—the sentiment of power and ownership, for instance, when they are held over human beings.

The reactionary man is very fond of asserting that women don't want this, that or the other. He generally can give no reason for this statement; enough that he knows it. When it is pointed out to him that all articulate and organised women do want it and say so, he declares contemptuously that these women don't count. It is not womanly to organise. Everyone knows that the traditional



woman, the womanly woman, can't organise. Therefore these hundreds of thousands of organised women are unsexed, negligible, not to be listened to. The only woman to be listened to is "the quiet woman in the home," and man will go forth into the world and proclaim what that quiet woman wants, and will give it to her. It does not seem to dawn upon him that it is more than a little suspicious that he should pronounce all those to be negligible who can speak for themselves.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE WOMAN'S WOMAN : A PERSON

“ . . . And, if we think of it, what does civilisation itself rest upon—and what object has it, with its religions, arts, schools, etc., but rich, luxuriant, varied Personalism ? To that all bends, and it is because toward such result Democracy alone, on anything like Nature's scale, breaks up the limitless fallows of humankind, and plants the seed, and gives fair play, that its claims now precede the rest.”—WALT WHITMAN, *Democratic Vistas*.

I N the last chapter mention was made of the tyranny of an ideal. Man thinks of the qualities he finds desirable in a woman and compounds an ideal woman out of these qualities, and then proceeds to call “ unsexed ” the real women of flesh and blood who do not conform or pretend to conform to this ideal. The older women have very naturally helped him to maintain these ideals ; they were reared in them, and they have feared lest it might be difficult to find provision for their daughters, unless they kept the daughters strictly to the dedicated ways. They were wrong, as timid people nearly always are wrong. The free woman, with a character and a will of her own, is not only happier and more useful, but she is proving herself

far more attractive than the colourless submissive ideal.

We have been wearied out with talk of the ideal woman, and now there comes a change, but it is more apparent than real. We hear now a good deal about a person called by the name of Normal Woman. Men who have done good work in some particular corner of scientific research have been largely responsible for the respect with which this talk about Normal Woman has been received, but when you come to look at her, you will find that she is merely Ideal Woman dressed up in scientific terms, and that the author of her being is no other than the Old Adam. It often seems to me that the common people, with no notion of general principles or of scientific and philosophic methods, cannot wander so fantastically far from truth and justice and common humanity as your man of science, when his sex-vanity has been hurt or his prerogative of pure egoism has been disturbed. The denunciations of scientific men have, fortunately, been robbed of many of their terrors by the work of women in biology and medicine. It would be only human if scientific women showed traces of their sex in their work, just as men do, but that these are very slight is suggested by the complaint of Sir Almroth Wright, who declared, in his widely read letter to *The Times* (March 1912), that medical women violated the "modesties and reticences upon which our civilisation has been built up," by putting above these their scientific "desire for

knowledge." One has seldom read a more splendid tribute to the courage and candour of women,—a tribute all the more splendid because so entirely involuntary,—for women know how scientific men of the type of Sir Almroth Wright have made the path of scientific knowledge a very Calvary for modest women. It is nothing to men of this type that the modesties of our civilisation should in the past have led to our women being handled and examined in hospital by youths of the sort common among medical students; that the reticences of this same civilisation should have led to many men and nearly all women being ignorant of all that goes to the building of a healthy and moral nation. Sir Almroth declares that man "cannot and does not wish to work side by side with women." Some men may not, but Sir Almroth is slandering his own sex when he makes the assertion for all mankind. The pioneer work of women of science was made possible by the existence of large numbers of scientific men willing to teach women. We may make a pretty shrewd guess at the reasons why some scientific men do not wish women to study science, for have not the medical and scientific women already, by their work, exploded many of the old fictions about women, and so put heart and hope into millions of women who felt their powers, but hardly dared believe in them, because of the dead weight of what they were told was science? They have now learned that all that is put forth by a scientific man is not science, and that when

sex comes into his calculations it is apt to be a very serious disturbance to clear thought. It seems to be a fact that men are as a rule far more conscious than women of the existence of sex in every relation of life, and if there be something in the speculations of biologists concerning the presence of male and female elements in the human female, there may be a very profound reason for this difference in outlook ; but it seems like mid-summer madness to say that the one of the two sexes who is most homogeneous in the elements of sex shall be the only one who shall have freedom to know and speculate and experiment, for it is clear that that one would be the one less likely to have sympathies wide enough to include both sexes.

What is the line the scientific reactionaries adopt ? They abandon Ideal Woman ; they offer you Normal Woman, and she turns out, on investigation, to be no other than average woman. They take from each woman what is peculiar or individual, what marks her out as different from other women ; they select what is common to women, sex and motherhood, and they proceed to say that for sex and motherhood women must live and be trained. When some half-crazy Strindberg or wholly crazy Weininger asserts that woman does not exist as a person, he is really only putting clearly the logical result of this tyranny of thought. It simplifies the side of life which has no obvious reference to themselves if they can make pigeon-holes all of one size

and shape, label them Normal Woman and stuff in all the women indiscriminately. But the cruelty and the waste is seen if we understand how the norm is arrived at. Procrustes' bed was for normal persons. If you measured all the feet of humanity and then found the average and made one boot—the average boot—for men, women and children, they would all suffer, but the severest sufferings would be those of the men with the largest feet. So with the wretched insistence on making all life to fit the average woman. She doesn't exist; she is a figment of men's minds, and every single woman suffers in her degree from the tyranny of the average, but the woman who suffers most is the biggest woman. The world suffers too, from the stunting or warping or exasperation of its strongest and most original female minds. One has only to think of the agony of loneliness of a Charlotte Brontë, of the limiting of her opportunities for equal friendships, for which she had so rare a genius, of her starvation in experience and in knowledge, and of the cruel tyranny of hated, because uncongenial, toil. A normal woman loves children, it is said. Well, Charlotte Brontë did not love children; yet she was forced to teach them, and to wear out her heart over them, and she cannot even have done it at all well. The children would have been better taught by someone else. If Charlotte Brontë had been given the same scope to shape her life as Branwell had—merely because he was a man—her work might have gained by contact with wider life, and she herself might

have lived longer to give us more of it. The stubborn courage of this woman of genius during years of soul-imprisonment and starvation should surely help to break down these stupid and wasteful cruelties.

The enthusiasts for Normal Woman do not entirely deny that here and there an exceptional woman may suffer from the restrictions of a woman's life, but they suggest that these sufferings are exaggerated, and affect only the exceptional women, and in any case only matter to the sufferer herself. It is wonderful with what complacency people can contemplate the sufferings of others ; wonderful, too, the assumption that " exceptional " women are negligible, as if it were not, after all, only among the exceptional that we might hope to find genius. These people will tell you that women have never done anything which the world would have missed, except the one work of mothering the race. Therefore to this work they should be restricted. Women will never, so they say, be anything but third-rate in arts or sciences or crafts ; they can be superlative mothers ; let them concentrate on that. If they do not, it is darkly suggested that they will lose even the capacity for mothering, and then, where will they be ? And, what is worse, where will men be ?

Sometimes these views are advanced with all the thunders of an angry prophet ; sometimes, more in sorrow than in anger, it is suggested that woman will sooner or later return to weep on the breast of man, and beg to be allowed, like Katharine, the

Shrew, to lay her hand beneath his foot. To do otherwise would argue in the fair sex (to use the denunciatory language of Sir James FitzJames Stephen) a "base, mutinous disposition," which we sincerely hope she has not. In the words of Mr. Garvin (*Pall Mall Gazette*, 30th July 1913), "we can only hope that, whatever the woman of the future may prove to be, some of the womanliness which we knew when Victoria was Queen will remain in her, and that, when the first force of revolt is spent, she will once more realise the full glory of wifehood and motherhood. On that point we have no great fear, for, whatever her vagaries, woman will remain woman at heart." I should like to rescue this exquisite piece of fatuity from oblivion, to make merry the hearts of future generations of men and women.

Now, as regards genius, we may know how much genius women have in some hundreds of years, when they have been free to develop according to their natures. The kind of emotional tyranny to which women have been subjected is the most crushing of all, and men have never had to undergo this particular sort of tyranny, so that it is not in the least true to say that if women had had any genius it would have overcome tyranny, as men's genius has done. No man has ever known what it is to be born of the more sensitive, sympathetic, conscientious and affectionate sex, and to be reared in an atmosphere where insult and hate followed on any expression of genius, where cold discouragement was the best that a woman could



expect from her own people, and where the wooing from her own work has taken that most insidious of all forms for duty-loving woman—the claims of others to her care and service. Those who hold the theory of the norm would, however, exclaim “God forbid that women should become geniuses ! We don’t *like* women geniuses, and, moreover, genius will interfere with motherhood.” If one of the necessities for genius is intense egotism (because no great work can be done without intense concentration, and this is impossible if the attention is perpetually switched off in order to do other people’s bidding), there is something to be said for the notion that genius will interfere with motherhood ; that is to say, with the capacity or the desire of the genius to fulfil the ordinary functions of motherhood. It is a common assertion that a woman fulfils herself completely in motherhood, but this is manifestly not true of the woman who wants to think about the higher mathematics, or who has a genius for organising masses. This does not dismay me at all. Why, after all, should the genius be a mother ? And if she be, could she not find motherly women to bring up the children ? It is mere delusion to insist that in all cases, without exception, the mother is the best person to tend the babies, and no one even suggests that the mother should be the sole educator of children when they have passed babyhood. I am not apprehensive that the mass of women will ever become geniuses and so cease to provide the men

and women of the future. It seems clear to common sense that geniuses will be few, and that it is mere cant for men, who contemplate quite serenely the existence of several million spinsters in England, to cry out in dismay at the notion of a singular genius, here and there, as the mysterious forces of nature may provide. The existence of these millions of spinsters *is* an exceedingly serious matter, because many of them probably desire intensely to be mothers, and would be good ones ; but it is only when the egoistic man fears that the unmated woman may be active and content, that his sensitive vanity is up in arms, and he is dismayed at the notion of a woman, of her free choice, forgoing man. He is content there should be millions of spinsters, if only they are unhappy.

Perhaps a eugenicist will here intervene and say that we want the best women to be mothers, and therefore the potential genius should sacrifice her individual opportunity, in order to become the possible mother of male geniuses. But it will not be easy to persuade the woman of the future that she should resist the inspiration which she knows she feels, in order to produce children who may not, and, in fact, probably will not, possess the inspiration. It is very natural for man to say to woman, " You shall give me not only your love, you shall give me your genius " ; but she cannot do it, for in the very dark and difficult problems which heredity presents to us, it is rare indeed to find a genius the son of a genius. If George Sand

and Elizabeth Barrett Browning had never written a line, we may doubt exceedingly whether the work of Maurice or of Robert Barrett would have been any better than it was. I once heard a youthful politician, now in Parliament, gravely oppose the eligibility of women to Parliament, on the ground that, if women went into Parliament, their babies would tumble into the fire. Now, quite apart from the circumstance that very few of the wives of existing Members of Parliament act all day and night as fireguards, there was this absurdity that there are only six hundred and seventy Members of Parliament, and, if they were every one of them women, there would still be many millions of mothers left to look after the babies. It might—we may grant this to the alarmists—be very uncomfortable if all women were, or tried to be, geniuses and Members of Parliament, but the mere fact that they are not forbidden will not make them all throw their energies in these directions, any more than it afflicts men so.

Like so much of the talk about women, this about genius is very little relevant to any practical problem. Even if it were true that women had never shown, and never would show, genius in art or abstract science, this is no reason for preventing them from using what ability they have in the directions they prefer, and it seems very likely that they have genius in directions hitherto almost forbidden to them ; I mean in organisation, and leadership, and in the power to govern. They

have certainly demonstrated their possession of many of the qualities upon which the strength of the community is founded, and it is to the advantage of the community that they should be allowed the free exercise of those qualities.

Reactionary men of science try to frighten us, however, by maintaining that the energetic use of any of woman's strength is contrary to healthy and efficient motherhood. They go on making these assertions, in spite of the fact that women who live a laborious life, provided they are not starved or neglected when they bring forth children, do it with far greater ease than women who live in luxury and idleness. They talk of metabolism and the necessity of a young girl storing up nourishment during the years of her adolescence, as if a human creature were nothing but a chemical factory and warehouse rolled into one. By the persistent and wilful neglect of the mind, they are able to arrive at the most astounding conclusions, and one wishes one could send them back half a century to the nursery of those days, and make them learn that "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do." It is not only idle hands, but idle hearts and minds that are a danger. If a girl's mind is caged and her education concentrated upon sex, it is not mothers you are rearing, but lunatics, deficient, hysterical, and anæmics. The people who talk as if a girl should be trained from childhood up for motherhood, quite overlook the very real possibility of tiring out the instinct

before its time of fruition. There are very many girls who would have had quite a healthy and natural fondness for babies, but who have had the feeling literally worn out by premature exercise or by sentimental pawing. A girl-child is not a small woman, and just as we should all disapprove any attempt to make "little fathers" of the boys, so we should disapprove the unhealthy endeavour to make "little mothers" of the girls. If there is something pathetic about the small girl drudge, stunted with carrying about heavy babies, there is something peculiarly offensive about the prim little girl who rebukes her brothers for tearing their clothes or dirtying their hands, when she ought herself to be likewise engaged.

From the Census reports it appears that in England and Wales there are nearly three and a half million spinsters over twenty years of age; many of these will never marry, and the cruelty of bringing them up to a vocation, which they will never be called upon to fulfil, should be repugnant to all decent feeling, even if it would not in itself constitute a danger. Such considerations do not trouble the sciolist with a theory to run, for he calls the maidens a "superfluous portion of the population," or "waste products of our female population,"<sup>1</sup> and proceeds to talk as if they could be set aside. But this piece of Podsnappery would bring its own punishment, if it were widely adopted, for undoubtedly the parasitic woman would be,

<sup>1</sup> *Sex Antagonism*, by Walter Heape, F.R.S.

in the future, as she has been in the past, the most deadly enemy of man. The only sex-antagonism that really exists is that arising from the attempts of one sex to repress or to get the better of the other. There is, in fact, absolutely no practicable issue for this way of thinking except the simple plan of the lethal chamber for the "waste products."

The training of women as breeders only, would involve the complete subjection of women to men, and consequently their complete dependence on men; it would involve the return to pre-factory days (in itself, perhaps, no bad thing, only no one knows how to do it), and to a state of things which has been partly remedied by the Married Women's Property and Custody of Children Acts; a state in which it was possible to pass and to administer the infamous Contagious Diseases Acts. It would mean that women would no longer have university education and would be compelled, as they used to be, to accept the assertions of men with regard to the state of the law and the construction of their own bodies. It means the withdrawal of women from the work of local councils and poor law administration, from inspection, and from teaching. It means a state of things which has never existed anywhere on this earth, and to avoid which most women would prefer a thousand deaths. All this for the purpose of producing finer children; but since the girl children would be of use only for further breeding purposes, one may say that

women would make all these tremendous sacrifices for the sake of producing finer men. It is a stiff demand to make even of the self-sacrificing sex ! But would it have the anticipated results ?

The question brings us to the well-fought battleground of breeding *versus* environment. When a suffragist procession in the States carried a banner declaring, " We prepare our children for the world ; we must prepare the world for our children," there was an outcry from some scientific persons, saying that that put the whole fallacy into a nutshell : the first was woman's job, the second was man's. It was for woman to breed the good child, and for man to make the good environment. A manufacturing nation still thrills responsive to the call for further division of labour ; that is to say, the dominant class, the employers do. But can we really produce a human being on the same system as we produce the pin beloved of early economists ? Let us look a little further. Even if we make the huge admission that a woman, a human being after all, with a mind, to say nothing of a soul, would retain her bodily and mental health under so hideous a system,—can this woman produce a good child all by herself ? Does it not matter in the least who is the father of the child ? Whether he has clean blood, and is of good stock ? What of the racial poisons which a man may inherit, but may also acquire in the course of a misspent life ? It is clear that the woman will have to select her mate, but how is a woman in subjection to do this ? So

that the first part of the division of labour manifestly cannot take place. The man must take part in preparing our children for the world. Can we really say that man alone does or can prepare the world for our children? It is too late in the day to tell us that, when every year that passes shows us more plainly the injurious effects upon the race of the industrial system, which is so largely the product of men's minds, and of the great social evils which were treated of in Chapters X. and XI., and which men have so largely agreed to consider "necessary." The theory of the cow-woman, who shall do nothing but bear and suckle babies, is not, as some people would have us believe, a revival of what once was and may be again. It never was. The masses of women have always worked very hard indeed. Nor will women be brought to accept it for the future. Degraded as women often have been, they have always had the one safeguard of work, even if it were not the work they would have chosen, and may have had to be done under unfavourable conditions. In complex modern society the work of women is even more necessary than in simpler days; only now there is more need than ever there was of intelligence, adaptability, scientific knowledge and organisation among women, for they cannot even be efficient mothers under modern conditions if their minds do not keep pace with knowledge and the arts of living.

Important, even of vital importance, as the work of physical motherhood is, and disastrous as every-



one must admit would be any social developments which impaired this, it is a monstrous distortion to talk as if physical motherhood were the only work of women. The maidens, the widows, the women who are having no more children, have endless natural spheres of usefulness and happiness, if only men will leave them free. There is a good deal to be said for the view that a large number of unmarried women were needed to get the women's movement well going. As a matter of fact, the leaders of the three chief suffrage societies are married women, and there are of course a very large number of wives in the women's movement ; but women with young children can scarcely see the wood for the trees, and such a gigantic piece of work as the organisation of the hitherto unorganised half of humanity has been one which has, of necessity, taken all the time and energy of very many women. Never again, in all probability, will there be such need for many women who can travel light. It is admitted that marriage may often be a brake on the man pioneer ; much more must it be so for the woman pioneer. It will not take us a hundredth part of the time to use our liberty that it has taken to win our liberty. Many a man, one is proud to record, has done his utmost to strengthen the hands of his wife in the movement which they both believe in ; but the husband is not unknown who likes to see all the other women progressive, only not *his* wife. And, of course, there are very many mothers whose children absorb, while they are

young, the greater part of their energies. Children grow up and the mothers very often have two-score years to put in after the babies have left off coming. As women's lives widen, there will be fewer of the mothers who bore their grown-up sons and nag their grown-up daughters. The work of such experienced matrons in the great organised work of mothering, care committees, schools for mothers, guardians of the poor, education authorities, is invaluable. But so long as the idiotic restrictions upon the civic work of women exist, and so long as women have not the means of independence, this work will still only be done by few of those who could do it so well. And the rest will still be like paddle-wheels out of water, wasting energy in a great whirring.

The men who speak of the maidens as waste products might also be invited to consider the millions of unmarried men, and to ask themselves whether these men really could marry, and whether there are not already very many men, who can marry only because they have devoted sisters who shoulder the burden of the old folk and the invalids ; nay, more, who help, out of their difficult earnings, to keep their nephews and their nieces.

The conclusion is that not men alone, and not women alone, can either prepare children for the world or the world for children. But both together can. The analogy of division of labour won't work when it is human beings that are being made. " Male and female created He them," and both are

indispensable. Therefore both must be equipped with knowledge and given liberty.

“ What will the women do then ? ” cry the faithless. Nobody knows, and that is one of the things that make life so hugely interesting.

“ . . . That roar,  
‘ What seek you ? ’ is of tyrants in all days.”

## CHAPTER XIV

### SEX-ANTAGONISM

#### (I) MAN'S PART

"God said to Adam : Thou shalt have dominion over all beasts ; and herein would seem to consist his advantage and superiority. Now, since man has dominion also over woman, who can be so mad as to deny that woman is rather a beast than a Man ?

"I think I have shown by fifty irrefragable testimonies from Holy Writ that woman does not belong to the same species as man, and is therefore incapable of eternal life."—HORATIO PLATA (quoted by W. H. BEVERIDGE, in *John and Irene*).

IN the last chapter it was asserted that the only sex-antagonism that really exists is that arising from the attempts of one sex to repress or get the better of the other. This is, in effect, to deny that the interests of the two sexes can be permanently opposed, and that, however much individuals, from the fallibility of human nature, may fall short of a proper treatment of each other, there is any excuse whatever for laws and institutions, which should be based on ethical considerations, being, as they still are, discriminative against one sex. So strong indeed is the notion still that

the interests of the sexes really are opposed, that any suggestion for legislation in the interests of women is met by the outcry that it is against men. The recent debates on the Maternity Benefit are admirable illustrations of this. When it was proposed that the thirty shillings, to be devoted to the care of the mother, should be given direct to the mother, there were some men who exclaimed that this was "interfering between husband and wife," and others, that it was "legislating against men." This shows an extraordinary confusion of mind; for the only men "legislated against" in such a provision are the bad men, who would, if they were given the chance, steal the woman's benefit. No good husband would be aggrieved at his wife's own money being given into her own hands. As why indeed should he? No woman feels aggrieved that her husband should have his wages paid into his own hands. If anyone thinks that the money is in reality his, because of the paltry fourpences that he has paid (and of which the working housewife has, by her work, contributed at least half), he should read the words of Medea—

"And then, forsooth, 'tis they that face the call  
Of war, while we sit sheltered, hid from all  
Peril!—False mocking! Sooner would I stand  
Three times to face their battles, shield in hand,  
Than bear one child."

While civilisation is young, and human beings still scarcely conscious, it is natural for the stronger to have the illusion that he will be the gainer by using his strength, even tyrannically, against the

creature with whom his life is inextricably entwined. It is human to be selfish; women as well as men feel the temptation; but men, by their greater strength, have more often had the power to follow their impulses, even if they were injurious to women.

There is a queer kind of apologist for brutality, who suggests that "men are so," and that nothing better need ever be expected of them, thereby showing himself blind to all the improvements which knowledge and intelligence have already made in men's treatment of women. Does it not matter to men that women should be injured? To read a recent volume, entitled *Sex Antagonism*, by Walter Heape, F.R.S., one would indeed suppose that it did not. Seven chapters of this book are devoted to a criticism of Dr. Frazer's theories on totemism and exogamy. These are matters for experts, and I do not propose to express an opinion upon them, further than to say that Mr. Heape has made out a very good case for his views on the origin of these two institutions of primitive man. He does not, however, make one wish to hand over the relations of the sexes in the world we live in to even the most expert of expert biologists, for his very concentration on particular points makes him unfit for a wide view. It is to Mr. Heape's eighth and last chapter, on "Primitive and Modern Sex Antagonism," that I wish to take exception, and this can be done without calling into question the greater part of the book, with which it has scarcely any necessary connection.

I need not quarrel with his assertion of the original difference between man and woman with regard to sexual relations. "I think," he writes, "it cannot be denied that while sexual passions and sexual gratification are of far more moment to the Male, the idea of the family is, in its turn, essentially a Female sentiment. The former inculcates and stimulates the roving freedom which is characteristic of the Male, the latter consolidates the family, and for the first time establishes the Female as an essential part of a social structure." (The last sentence is dark to me, but let it pass.) The statement may be taken as broadly true of primitive man. Further, it is quite clear that Mr. Heape is uttering almost a platitude, when he states (p. 195) that "The Male and Female are complementary ; they are in no sense the same, and in no sense equal to one another ; the accurate adjustment of society depends upon proper observance of this fact." No one thinks Male and Female are "the same," nor when people speak of "equality" do they in fact use the word in a mathematical sense. What people do wrap up, in confused and misleading terms, is, that although women are not the same as men, they have many of the same properties and therefore many of the same requirements. Shylock's plea for the Jew has been quoted with much force by women and on behalf of women : "Hath not a Jew eyes ? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions ? fed with the same food, hurt with

the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? and if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?"

Men cannot deny that women need food, like men, and that women catch infectious diseases, like men, and that women, like men, need satisfaction for their sexual nature, although by their actions men sometimes do not demonstrate their knowledge. But there are other needs—of the human spirit—less demonstrable, which women have as much as men: the need for freedom and joy, for pride in themselves and their work, for consciousness that the sacrifices they make are willing, not enforced. And, when women demand "equality" with men, what they are asking is, that they shall have equal opportunities to do the things they feel able to do, and also that they should have for their peculiarly feminine work—the work which men cannot do—more help, more training, more expenditure of public money, and more scope altogether to do it in ways adapted to the modern world they live in.

We start out, then, with the recognition of the difference between men and women, and I wish I could see in Mr. Heape a recognition also of the likeness and of the common interests. But this is where he comes to grief so badly. He asserts (p. 199) that "increase of luxury tends to reduce



both the inclination to breed and the power of producing offspring among women, while it increases the sexual activity of men." This is not the place to make an exhaustive analysis of this assertion, but stated roundly, like this, it seems to me to need considerable modification. If, however, we take it as proved, it would represent a serious state of things, requiring the most earnest consideration and determination on the part of all civilised men and women to face it in all its results for the whole human family. It would seem to thoughtful persons that any social condition leading to a marked widening between the reciprocal desires of the sexes was, by that very fact, a bad condition, and that if luxury really widens the breach between men and women and causes sex-antagonism, this is a very strong reason for discouraging luxury in a far more determined way than has ever been attempted. Mr. Heape has himself insisted that the female is concerned for the race and the male is only concerned for his appetitive satisfaction. His contribution to the difficult problem he has himself propounded is, to suggest that women (solely concerned for the race, mind you !) must be overridden by men ; that what he calls the " errant male " should freely roam and satisfy his ever-growing appetites where and how he can ; and that women should on no account be given " extended power " to face these difficulties together with men. In fact, having made out that the situation is infinitely more

difficult and extreme than it is, he does his little best to envenom and embitter it by passages of this kind: "Thus extended power given to women threatens to result in legislation for the advantage of that relatively small class of spinsters who are in reality but *a superfluous portion of the population* (italics mine); and since their interests are directly antagonistic to the interests of the woman who is concerned in the production of children, legislation enacted on their behalf will tend to be opposed to the interests of the mothers themselves." This dark saying is nowhere explained or illustrated, and as I am quite unable to imagine what it means, I can only suppose that Mr. Heape is using the old device of trying to sow dissension in the enemy's ranks. For there is no mistake at all about the fact that, to Mr. Heape, woman is the enemy. But he will find it hard to convince the women in the movement that the interests of maidens are opposed to the interests of wives. It will be even more difficult than to convince us that our interests are really opposed to those of men. We think that this is "The Great Illusion," and the other is too patently absurd, since a maiden is liable at any moment to become a wife, and, in these days, it is becoming increasingly difficult to say at what age this liability ceases. Progressive women do not for one moment admit that marriage unsexes a woman, and that the moment she secures a husband she becomes hostile to the maidens, or ceases to understand them. If Mr. Heape would

look at the world he is actually living in, he would see that some of the needs of the mothers in the administration of the Insurance Act were more effectively put and urged by unmarried women than by married men. I knew a woman who had a very warm discussion with a man on sex questions, what time his wife sat silent by. The man constantly declaimed about "what women wanted, what women thought," and still the wife never spoke. Later, when the two women were alone, the one expressed a hope that she had not spoken too strongly and offended the wife, who replied, "I can't tell you how glad I am that you said what you did. You see, I can't, *because I'm his wife.*"

Mr. Heape proceeds in this elegant style: "Those of us who are strongly in favour of gaining assistance from women who are qualified to give it may well be drastically opposed to the claims made by those who are responsible for the present agitation; for we are thus confronted with the probability that extended power given to women will result in *the waste products of our Female population* gaining power to order the habits and regulate the work of those women who are of real value to us as a nation" (*italics mine*). In the next paragraph he declares that he finds it difficult to "refer with equanimity" to the books and pamphlets of the women's movement, and he mentions one odd publication, which he appears to attribute to feminists and which, he avers, holds up man to

execration as "the brute beast." We are bound to believe that Mr. Heape has seen such a pamphlet, and that he did not write it himself, but the description he himself gives of man in his book would entirely warrant the use of such a term. Men in the mass are *not* what Mr. Heape makes them out to be,—lascivious animals with no regard for the State, the race, the child or the woman; it is a libel on manhood. But a writer who can speak of the unmarried women as "waste products" is in a queer position to protest against his own caricature of man being called a "brute beast." That is precisely what Mr. Heape's man is and what the real man is not. In fact, while progressive women are always being accused of abusing men, I have never heard a woman utter such slanders on mankind as those contained in this book. Another curious instance of how men will exceed anything women ever say in condemnation of men is to be found in a remark made by a magistrate at the Sandwich Quarter Sessions in October 1912, that criminal assault by adult men on baby girls was "just one of the things that the very best people in every class of life were apt in an unguarded moment to commit." Mr. Heape describes women as having a nervous constitution ever on the verge of hysteria and impulsive insanity; but if we are to believe him, and the Sandwich magistrate, men are far more dangerous lunatics and should certainly be put under restraint.

Let us get out of this nightmare and come to

the real world as we know it. Certainly there are some blackguards and some lunatics of both sexes. Certainly there is, and perhaps always has been, some antagonism between the sexes. It is the most constant endeavour and the most firm faith of progressive men and women that this antagonism should cease. We do not believe it to be necessary and we do believe it to be altogether bad. A great deal too much is made of the differences between men and women under civilised conditions. Mr. Heape's bogey-man is depicted as a sort of Saturn devouring his children, regardless of their welfare, desiring woman simply as the instrument of his pleasure, possessing no personal, national or racial love. Woman, on the other hand, is pictured to us as having no personal feelings towards her mate, desiring him only for the purpose of motherhood, and desiring even motherhood so faintly that the least thing will put her off it. It is difficult to have patience with a description so preposterously untrue to ordinary life. And Mr. Heape's recommendations for dealing with this appalling condition are the most extraordinary part of the whole queer affair. For he would have us "rattle into barbarism" with open eyes. According to him, all civilisation, all the united efforts of persons to make a more endurable dwelling-place on earth, all care for the future of the race, is by origin womanly, and yet—and yet—the all-devouring male is to abandon this hardly acquired civilisation, to cease to learn of the woman, and once more

to roam the world and leave his squaw to take her chance with the papooses !

To suggest that man can go on modifying his material conditions, piling luxury on luxury, and yet need not adapt himself and his sexual life to these conditions, but can remain primitive brute beast, is wilfully to blind oneself to facts, and such blindness, if it were common, would indeed be the cause of race suicide. So long as either sex preys upon the other, or enslaves the other, we are in danger of finding that man, having conquered the world, becomes his own victim.

In the writings of reactionaries on this subject there is to be found an extraordinary contradiction. Their plea for the subjection of women and for the entire dedication of women to the sexual life has to be based upon the supposed truth of the assertion that, in women, sex is the predominant factor, nay, the only factor of importance. It ought to be, they think ; and it is, they assert ; whereas, to man, sex is only a passing gratification, and he goes on his way and forgets all about it. Yet if it be suggested that, in the interests of the race, men might learn to control their impulses,—have, in fact, to a certain extent done so,—and that they have all the beauty and work of the world to fill their minds, these same reactionaries fill the air with cries at the sufferings and damage which such self-restraint will impose upon men. Mr. Heape himself asserts that disuse does not impair men's sexual powers, and that it does

impair those of women ; yet his conclusion appears to be that men alone are not to be required to exercise self-control. Now, if sex is so tremendously strong in women, it cannot be necessary artificially to nurse it and to render all other activities impossible ; if it is not so predominant after all, but women are whole human beings, just as men are, with all sorts of capacities, then it is cruel to endeavour to restrict them against their nature, and must, in the long-run, be injurious to them and to the whole of society. It is not consonant with the dignity of the Human that either male or female should be treated as a thing. Primitive men may treat women as "conveniences" ; primitive women may exploit men for their own purposes ; so long as they act in this primitive manner there will exist a state of war. The hope for the race lies in the Human growing up. Adult man will abandon the Great Illusion.

With regard to the supposed absence of personal feeling on the part of the woman, the supposition is altogether out of accord with the facts of life as one knows it. Women fall in love quite as wholeheartedly as men, and when a woman falls in love with a man, the sentiments that fill her being are not in the first instance consciously racial ; they are personal. She desires union with her lover, just as he desires union with her, and the completest union has no use for compulsion in any form whatsoever. Those who personify vital forces are very fond of saying that "Nature" uses the love of man and

woman "to further her purposes" (meaning the reproduction of the species), and there is often a sort of half-suggestion that man and woman are in reality helpless puppets whom "Nature" deludes with the mirage of love. Nothing is more misleading than these personifications of forces. Love is no delusion at all; it is the one condition under which personal appetite and racial purpose become fused into the force most productive of joy and health and beauty. Scientific men who try to reduce the relations of the sexes to mere animal appetite, and leave out of account the passion of love and the sentiment of affection are in truth less scientific than the merest girl. The growth of love is the one security for the adaptation of the Human to his environment.

Perhaps some people would say, "You talk of love, but men will not love the progressive women. It is no use arguing that they should; they don't, as a matter of fact, and they never will." It is true that one does not love because one should. Nothing kills love more surely than compulsion, and that is the basis of my whole plea for liberty. I have no fear whatever that women will cease to attract men, but women should not have to rely upon their power of sexual attraction for a free and varied existence. I often marvel at the lack of pride and of self-confidence in the men who advocate what amounts to starving women into sexual relations. If there are women who are unlovable, the proper penalty is to leave them unloved; it is not the



proper penalty to starve them. If some women are unlovable, so, in truth, are some men, and coercion will not help them. On the contrary ; what might be good comradeship is turned into hatred by coercion. And it is not only the injured person who hates ; there is no hate like that of the tyrant for the object of his repression, and the literature of the world is full of this strange and terrible hatred of men for women. The early fathers of the Christian Church forgot their Master in the most scurrilous attacks on that half of humanity to which Jesus most fully revealed Himself. The gibbering fear of women showed itself in the witch trials and in the monstrous inventions of perverted monks. In recent times a little anthology entitled, *Come learn of Me what Woman is*, and a still more recent one by Mr. W. H. Beveridge, entitled *John and Irene*, show a record of literature of abuse by men which has no counterpart whatever in the writings and speeches of women. In their desperate seeking for safety there is no doubt that primitive women had to defend themselves by any device they could invent ; and since men made a wicked mystery of them, they would mystify men as far as they could, for their own purposes. One sees women still doing this, and sees the traces of the old fear in the less civilised modern man's shoulder-shrug at the incalculable female.

Men have done a vast amount of speculation and theorising about women, and have remained for the most part quite remote from the reality, which is

very much simpler than all their inventions. The fact is that many of those who have poured out their venom upon women have been men whose unregulated appetites have led them to consort with women either naturally or artificially adapted to them, and they have then proceeded to expound the eternal feminine in terms of the prostitute. Many of the theories about Woman, of which we hear so much just now, are really based upon a more or less intimate acquaintance with prostitutes, and it is one of the ugliest sides of this ugly traffic that the men who buy the women seem to hate and despise them so, and they then proceed to generalise about all women on the data of the hated and despised ones. Progressive women do not hate the prostitute, but they recognise that, by weakness or by choice, she has committed a great sin against the spirit, and they rightly resent generalising about all women from knowledge (and only the most partial knowledge) of these unhappiest. Reading Schopenhauer, or Weininger, or Strindberg, one can only exclaim, "What company have these men kept!" They and a few scientific specialists appear to be the modern descendants of the authors of *Malleus Maleficarum*.

Owing to sex-obsession, some of these men are permanently unable to understand women, and their way of treating women is vitiated by this incapacity. It may be admitted, with reserves, that the characteristic of the love passion in woman is receptivity, but this is by no means the character-

istic of woman in all relations. If one takes only the maternal impulses in women, who would deny that they were active, nay, even sometimes belligerent, if it comes to defending their children? And the coolness towards all men except the one with whom she is in love makes a woman not only peculiarly capable of friendship, but also makes her extremely intolerant of sentimental appeals to the passivity which is associated with the love passion. Women are moved by sexual impulses towards particular men, not towards men as a whole, and men will never understand women so long as they do not recognise this.

This does not mean, of course, that women feel the same towards men as they do towards each other. The differences of mind and life and outlook between men and women make the society of each vastly stimulating to the other, provided always that the women are not artificially cramped, and make a mixed society far wider and humaner than the society of either sex alone. Men scarcely yet know the extent to which they impoverish their own lives by denying a full life to women, and thereby dulling and stupefying women.

And consider, too, how hopelessly unfit man has proved himself for a judicial attitude towards woman! He has allowed his own sex-impulses entirely to obscure his judgment about women. If he is much too hard on the good women, he tries to propitiate his feminine critics by pointing out how much too lenient he is with the bad ones. He

makes the law (I speak of England) ; he is judge and advocate and jury, policeman and jailer. When a woman is arraigned for soliciting his custom, he imprisons her, and keeps his own share of the transaction secret. When, in her despair, she abandons the child he too has abandoned, he again punishes her.

Who set man in judgment over woman ?

## CHAPTER XV

### SEX-ANTAGONISM

#### (2) WOMAN'S PART

"They that have power to hurt, and will do none,  
That do not do the thing they most do show,  
Who, moving others, are themselves as stone,  
Unmovèd, cold, and to temptation slow,—

They rightly do inherit Heaven's graces,  
And husband nature's riches from expense ;  
They are the lords and owners of their faces,  
Others, but stewards of their excellence."

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

**I**F men have made the mistake of attempting to repress women, we must admit that women have taken their share of the sex war in attempting to get the better of men. Men have insisted that women shall live by their sex alone, and women have used their sex in every conceivable way to accomplish their ends. Men have drawn ring-fences round women and then twitted them with their narrowness. Men have had to bow to the necessity of women bearing and rearing children, but whereas this is a work requiring the broadest culture and the widest sympathies, men have for

ages restricted women's culture and cramped women's sympathies. Full of vitality and personality, women have felt the heavy hand of brute force upon them, and like all live persons, they have either fretted and rebelled (which, when it is done by a woman, is called nagging), or they have circumvented the oppressor by wiles and lies. True, women have impotently raged against men, and, true, it is a pity. If you are weak and ignorant, your rage will, half the time, be not only impotent, but directed against the wrong things and the wrong persons. True, women have lied to men and cheated them, and some of these women have been the most successful in twisting men round their little fingers, while the incurably honest women have looked on in disgust and despair. But no one can say that women have abused men more than men have abused women—all literature and history proves the reverse. No one can say that women have lied to men more than men have lied to women; the deserted girl-mothers are the witnesses.

All these mistakes are due to selfishness, and this is a human, not a sex characteristic. It is always a difficult matter for each individual person to determine when self-expression and self-development merge into selfishness, and there is no short way and no simple rule by which it can be determined. One must allow that men have greater natural temptations to be selfish, owing to physical differences between them and women, and the

education of boys, instead of, as now, enhancing the force of these temptations, should be directed to counteracting them. The physical circumstances of motherhood, for instance, do not allow a woman to escape the consequences of the sexual act as a man can. It requires more imagination for a man to realise the cruelty of deserting a baby than it does for a woman to realise it. The baby reminds her. So we find that women less often desert their babies than men do. A healthy public opinion would stimulate the man's imagination in this direction. Again, man's greater physical strength makes it more easy for him to bully a woman than for her to bully him. When, by chance, a woman is physically stronger than a man, she does not always refrain from using her force unchivalrously. If it be true that a man has stronger appetites than a woman, this again increases his temptations; but one must, if one allows this circumstance, also allow that it may give the woman an advantage, and so tempt her to bully the man in her way, and there is no doubt some women yield to this temptation. I sometimes see, in the very cruelty of men to women, a hidden agony of fear lest, ultimately, women should need men less than men need women. If this be true on the purely animal plane, nothing could be further from the truth, if we take the whole human creature into account, and men who, by brutality (the result of fear and the cause of fear, too), kill the higher attractions of which they are capable,

are making a tremendous miscalculation ; for they might attain by the one what they altogether miss by the other ; and this is going in the future to be more so, not less. The women of the future will have men on terms, or go without, and the terms must be the only honourable terms, of love and liberty and mutual service. A man will find he has no need to preach wifely submission to the woman whose love he has won, and he will find that he does not want it either.

Alarmists declare that the women's movement has caused sex-antagonism. The preceding chapter has, I think, disposed of such an absurd contention, and most thoughtful persons do not defend a statement so easily refuted by literature and history. Others, with more evidence, maintain that sex-antagonism was there, a kind of sleeping dog, which the women's movement has now aroused to vicious attack. It is contended that the progressive women have stirred up normal women to rebellion, which they never would, of themselves, have contemplated ; that the progressives are mischief-makers, who have put dangerous ideas into the heads of people quite unable to carry them out, and the only result will be unrest, disputes, discomfort for men, misery for women, and a final vindication of the supreme authority of man. The progressives will probably suffer severe castigation, but the normal women will be kissed and forgiven, for, after all, they are only women and not quite accountable for their



actions ; and, besides, men are really rather fond of the silly things. This is the style of the commoner leader - writer in the anti - suffrage newspapers.

We may grant at once that the women's movement would not be where it is but for its leaders. This is no less true of the women's than of all other movements. A movement does not really get going until leaders have arisen from the ranks ; the absurd mistake is to suppose that a movement can be *kept* going for any prolonged time by the leaders only, without support from the ranks. For many years, the women found it exceedingly difficult to raise up leaders from their own ranks, and a very considerable lead was, as a matter of fact, given by men. But until women had arisen who could carry on the leadership, progress was slow, partial and almost entirely academic. If John Stuart Mill's searching analysis of women's position had not made women think for themselves ; if his disgust and shame had raised no answering disgust and shame in women, they would have proved themselves fit for the position they were in, and would never have begun to stir out of it. And about that time there were other men too, ready to help, William Lloyd Garrison and Walt Whitman and Mazzini and Stansfeld and Henry Sidgwick, and all the other people who did the pioneer work of helping the women to get education and training, and of opening up careers to them. Then, although the active reformers among

men have been comparatively recent, there have been great artists, from the earliest times, who have held the mirror up to man and shown him his deeds towards woman. No feminist tract can compare for propaganda purposes with *The Trojan Women*, or *Medea*. Tell a woman she has no concern with the great imperial matters of peace and war, and then give her the first to read! She will have a whole armoury of answers. Or try to crush a woman who has read the second with reproaches concerning the treachery and falseness of womankind! If the sex-war is as old as history, there have been—and herein lies our chief hope—men in all times who have read its causes. If it were not so, we might despair of the true causes ever appearing to all.

If sex-war has existed because the majority of men were tempted by their superior physical force to enslave women, and because the majority of women have retaliated by using the only power available to them, the power of sex, to get some of their own back, it is clear that much of the war on the women's side was not overt. It is impossible, however, to believe that the women who have lied to men, and deceived them, and who have played upon their sex, have not in their hearts felt considerable contempt for the men they were entrapping through their grosser nature. It is a sorry picture that is presented to us, of the "womanly" woman cajoling and bamboozling a man into complaisance, and that state of things cannot

be described as peace, while the present state of friction is called war. There are elements of warfare in both, but the first was underhand and corrupting, while the foolish elements of the present condition are patent and, as I believe, temporary. I believe this because I feel pretty sure that there is enough fairness in the mass of men for them not permanently to resist what is just in the women's claim, once the women make it plain ; and secondly, because what has been foolish or wrong in the women's movement is the result of the old folly and wrong which the movement as a whole is directed against : the folly of trying to make legislative action precede education, and the wrong of fighting evil with evil, the age-long error of retaliation.

One must grant that one hears a great deal more of sex-antagonism now than one did even ten years ago ; certainly much more than one did a quarter of a century ago. But if anyone will take the trouble to compare the debates in the House of Commons twenty-five years ago with the debates now, and note the difference of tone when women are mentioned, he cannot avoid being struck by the fact that the thing is getting more talked about now, just because it is going. The old contempt for women has largely gone, and has been replaced by a most serious, if considerably bewildered effort to understand what the women would be at. It does not lie in the mouths of men who built or maintained in the House the monkey cage, which

goes by the euphemistic name of the Ladies' Gallery, to assert that there was no antagonism ; those men both feared and despised women. The cage will go when Englishmen realise (it takes them some time) how ridiculous they appear to all the world by exhibiting themselves as in terror of their own women.

In many other ways women feel the antagonism less, and one improvement of the utmost importance to them is the enormous increase in their liberty of going about without molestation from men. When I was a girl, it was considered rather a bold thing for a lady to walk unescorted within the precincts of the City of London, and there were very few restaurants where she would have been safe from rudeness. Consider who offered this rudeness : men. And why ? because, though the woman was doing an absolutely harmless thing, she was singular, and it was assumed that she did it from an improper motive and was therefore fair game ; or still more simply, because the cruel lust of tormenting a helpless creature was irresistible. What woman who has moved an inch out of shelter, but has encountered this ?

Still, the antagonism is much less than it was. How is it that we hear more of it ? The chief reason is a very simple one : women's griefs have become reasoned and articulate. Whereas women were fighting man by wiles and arts, they are now appealing to his reason and finding words for their appeal, while a few, exasperated, are hitting out

rather wildly with man's own weapons. In order to appeal to men's reason, women have had to find words for their grievances and their differences, and to give words to a thing always makes it ten times as important as it was. The unreasonable man points to the inarticulate women and invites you to note how satisfied they are ; he then points to the articulate ones and cries shame on them for fomenting sex-war. To the unreasonable man, it is impossible ever to demonstrate women's grievances, for to do so is at once to be reproached with being " anti-man " ; yet surely even he might admit that to err is human. If he had a little of the gift of humour, he might profitably consider the eighteenth-century treatment of women, and ask himself if it is really not rather funny that he should be so hurt when women at last find tongue to say what they think of the rare old sport of woman-baiting. When the admirable Sir Charles Grandison ejaculates, " Were it not, my dear ladies, for male protectors, to what insults, to what outrages, would not your sex be subject ? " he was not overstating the case against the men of that day. It was not against the other forces of nature, against hunger or cold, or wild beasts that women most needed protection ; it was against insult and outrage from man. Man was, by far, woman's most formidable enemy and most terrible danger. Women are frequently invited to bewail the death of chivalry. What chivalry meant, in these days, was the protection by individual men of their own

women against the depredations of other men. If a woman had no "protector" of her own, or if he chanced to be a tyrant, she remained unprotected by the State. The growth of a healthier opinion among men has now greatly reduced the number of men who desire to "outrage and insult" women, and has greatly increased the State protection of women. There will perhaps always be some few men of primeval instincts, or what is worse, of primeval instincts corrupted by modernity; but it is for civilised men to reduce them as far as they can, to control those that cannot be civilised, and surely not to become their apologists.

The development in England that is known as militancy is, so far, peculiar to England, and is the result of the political situation and of the temperament and character of two women, Mrs. Pankhurst and her daughter Christabel, acting upon it. The fiery and self-willed nature of Mrs. Pankhurst made her a person to whom half-measures and compromises have always been repugnant. Her deep and passionate sex-pride gave her an eloquence and an attractive force which drew thousands of women to her. She voiced in a language new to the timid and the ladylike, all the revolt that was gnawing at the hearts of women. To many women it must have seemed that their deepest unuttered thoughts and the unuttered thoughts of generations of women had found expression, and anyone who has had this experience, knows what intense devotion is

felt towards the person who has the courage and the genius to utter the words. If Mrs. Pankhurst alone had inspired the militant movement, it would have been at once a nobler and a more terrible thing than it has proved. The machine, that wonderful engine of advertisement and ingenuity, was the work of other minds. Doubtless it was the machine which served to make the lightning progress of the militant movement in its first years ; it has been the machine, however, which has largely been responsible for the disasters of recent times. What was great and noble has become inextricably entangled with what the public has come to regard as a gigantic fake, and consequently the attitude of the public is either one of amusement, to see what fresh trick ingenuity will invent, what fresh show will be presented to the gaping crowd, or of exasperation at what seems to them like pointless mischief. The clever exploiting of the psychology of mobs did not go deep enough, and was, in truth, far too cynical. There is an appalling amount of mob spirit (not by any means confined to the common people, but to be seen even in the House of Commons), and many of the militant devices have successfully appealed to this ; but no reform worth having was ever won from the mob, and it is the tragic truth that much of the deeper meaning of the most selfless and devoted sacrifice on the part of individual women has been hidden by the very advertisement which it has received.

When the Women's Social and Political Union

sprang into public view some eight years ago, the time was certainly ripe for a revival. Some people still think that the Union has done nothing but harm. This has always seemed to me an unreasonable opinion. Undoubtedly they made other work extraordinarily difficult in some ways, and for a time. They captured the press, but, since they did not win the approval of the press for their object, but only secured notices by their sensationalism, it was, for some years, actually more difficult for other workers to get any publicity at all for their views or their work. The report of a street row always gets precedence of the report of a peaceful meeting, and the result of this was that, for some years, the newspapers were filled with reports of militancy, while their columns showed nothing of the great and steady growth of the non-militant movement, nor did they even do justice to the educational side of the militants' work. This condition of things was in itself intensely provocative, and nothing is a more striking example of women's level-headedness and far-sightedness than the fact that the enormous mass of suffragists refused to be provoked to any unconsidered act of retaliation. Some of them had the political sense to note that the newspapers which gave most prominence to militancy were those most hostile to women's suffrage.

It would take very much more space than I have, thoroughly to argue the pros and cons of militancy, to distinguish its different forms, and to disentangle its motives. Like all great movements, this one



contains people who have joined it for very different motives, and some of the arguments by which it has been defended are mutually destructive. Its greatest achievement in my opinion is that it woke people up and opened their purses, in a way totally unprecedented. It made those who had never cared realise that some women cared intensely, and made them ask why. It made those who had been working for long years realise that there were many yet untried methods, and that some of them were good. Above all, it made many women feel that, if they desired the enfranchisement of women, and if they did not like the methods of the W.S.P.U., the only respectable thing to do was to work as hard, and give as much for what they thought right, as these other women did. To the constitutional suffragists, it is a matter of complete indifference who gets the credit, when the vote is won ; but it is a matter of the utmost import to them, not only that the vote should be won, but that both women and men should be prepared to make the best use of so great a reform.

Something can, of course, be done by telling people they *are* ready. This is what the early militants did. There was no real opposition in the country ; there was a very large favourable majority in the House, and there had been a majority since 1886. One can quite conceive a revival which would in a few years have carried mere inertia. What happened was that the W.S.P.U. inflamed a party against the movement, and this party was the

one which by its first principles was actually pledged to support the movement. Temper, party advantage, personal loyalties were all aroused; but, instead of being aroused for the suffrage movement, they were inflamed against it. It was to be war. All possible peaceful methods had, we were told, been tried and had failed. (This was, of course, the great and fundamental untruth. The work up to that time had not had anything like the popular appeal of recent years.) At first, by skilful advertisement, it almost seemed as if elections might be lost and won by these means, and some alarm was felt in party circles; but it did not take long to show that there were very few men who were going to vote against their party at the command of the militant suffragists, and the cry of "Keep the Liberal out!" became ineffective. It caused the maximum of irritation and the minimum of effect.

The militant campaign would have succeeded if the majority of women, even perhaps if the majority of suffragists, had backed it. I am not afraid of making this concession, holding, as I do, that the enormous majority of women kept out of the militant movement from ethical considerations. It is not easy to bring the ethical case against the militants, because they themselves waver incessantly between two positions. Sometimes they are soldiers, fighting a battle, inflicting damage, having a "siege of Whitehall" (to quote from one of their posters), "proving that women can fight." Sometimes they are martyrs, who do injury to no one but

themselves ; who merely refuse to be governed without their consent ; who have adopted the Oriental device of dying on their enemy's doorstep. Now this second policy is the very reverse of the first, and the only thing that can be said against it is, that it is an extreme measure which should on no account be undertaken, until ordinary methods of education and organisation have been fully tried. To become a martyr as soon as you can't get your own way, is a form of spiritual bullying that is extraordinarily exasperating.

But the first policy cuts away the whole ground upon which the women's demand is based ; upon this ground not only would men infallibly beat women, but the great mass of women, as well as men, would feel that the militant women had invited defeat. When Mrs. Leigh adjures her women hearers to use their nails upon the eyes of men who attempt to arrest them, does she not know that this could only succeed for as long as the men disbelieved the women's intentions ? As soon as the men apprehended real danger, they could effectively dispose of the women. Even if it were not wrong, it would be futile in the extreme. But it is wrong, inexcusably wrong, on the part of women, whose experience of life ought to have proved to them that for women to invite physical force against themselves is to provoke all the forces of reaction against which their movement is, in reality, directed. Long years ago, men threw stones and filth at women who asked for enfranchise-

ment. Gradually public opinion killed out this hooliganism. Then came the militants, and, by smashing windows and arson and general terrorism, revived the ape in men, so that, for some years past, all women are once more in danger of violence from men. It is degrading to both men and women, and the only merit that I can see in the process is, that men who have so loved to exercise all the virtues vicariously in their women, are being a little shocked to see how ugly violence can be, and, from seeing it ugly in a woman may, by and by, turn to see it ugly in themselves.

It is hypocrisy, of course, for men to say that they refuse women's claims because some women have been violent, firstly, because they refused them just the same, before women became violent ; secondly, because only a few women have been violent ; thirdly, because the vote was not given to men as a reward for their abstinence from violence. In fact, the brutalities of anti-suffragists might make the more sensitive Antis cease, for very shame, to reproach the other side with violence, their own side having been guilty of personal assaults of the most disgusting nature.

Men have not yet given women the vote, partly because they are very slow to move and indifferent about women's questions ; partly because they are still somewhat fearful of what women may do ; but chiefly because no political party has yet seen a clear party gain to be made by it. This last, which has been the greatest obstacle to the accom-

plishment of this reform, will be its great safeguard once it has been won. The women's vote would be on a precarious tenure if it were won by one party in the teeth of the bitter opposition of the whole of the other party. The peaceful and fruitful use of the vote depends upon a general conversion of the country to the principles involved. Representative institutions can only work well by common consent and goodwill.

Militants sometimes defend their violence by saying how trivial, after all, it has been. This, of course, is true. But what a strange argument to use in defence of war! "See how little damage our guns do!" And although I am convinced that they refrain from more serious crime, because their consciences revolt from it, they lay themselves open to the unthinking retort that they only do not do more because they can't; a retort not only untrue, but provocative, to people sufficiently childish to be "dared" into action. What women have to do is to make their demand a formidable demand, and they cannot do this by adopting methods which the enormous mass of women will never whole-heartedly apply. By continued education, by well-considered and thoroughly prepared political action, by constant readiness for negotiation, by taking men always on their best side, and by making the help of women worth having, suffragists will enlist an ever-growing mass of women to hard work and sacrifice, and, what is more, they will convince men of the constructive

ability of women, and of the possibility of men and women working together in the future.

In the course of the militant movement, one has seen a vast amount of femininity using the old weapons, which one hopes will be gradually laid aside. Defiance alternating with injured innocence. The smashing of a window by a woman, who cries, when a man apprehends her, "You mustn't touch me! I'm a woman!" The frequent inexcusable untruth that "women are being imprisoned for daring to ask for the vote," and that the Home Secretary is starving women in prison. It would have been too wonderful if women, in their fight for liberty, had proved themselves perfect. We have not. We have shown human foibles, like men, partisanship and violence, like men, and we have shown some faults which, though not specifically feminine, are the faults natural to subjected persons.

When all is said about the mistakes and faults and follies of suffragists, those of the Government have been far greater. They belittled the women's movement, and treated it with the sort of sneering contempt which is more provocative than anything in the world. They magnified the first importunities into crimes. The early militants were treated with monstrous and disproportionate severity, and this contributed largely to their early popularity. They were treated like the worst criminals, for mere impropriety, or for the technical offence of obstruction. They were subjected to the most

abominable brutalities when they asked questions at meetings. (It was a most unhappy thought which struck them, when they found out how easy men's nerves and men's passions make it for a woman to break up a meeting.) Two Acts of Parliament and innumerable special orders have been devised to deal with them, and have failed. Everybody with the slightest political insight knows that the reform must come. When Mr. Asquith (House of Commons, 6th May 1913) attempted to define what he meant by a demand for the vote, he said—

“I mean a demand which proceeds from a real, deep-seated, and widely diffused sense of grievance and discontent. I do not think that my honourable Friends will dispute that that is a fair statement of the case. Of course, I do not deny for one moment—who could?—that there are women, and many women in this country, including some of the most gifted, most accomplished, most high-minded of their sex, who do feel in that way. It would be absurd and ridiculous to disguise the facts of the case. So, again, and this is a very serious consideration, it is clear from the phenomena of what is called militancy, to which I am not going to make any further reference, that there are women whose temperaments are such that this same sense of wrong, twisted, perverted, inflamed, as I think in their case it is, the same sense of wrong leads to anti-social courses which men and even women find it difficult to conceive.”

This was, in fact, a complete abandonment of the anti-suffrage position, and a recognition that the

reform must come, and come soon. If many of the best women feel a real and deep sense of grievance, and if other women are being "twisted, perverted, and inflamed" by this sense of wrong, it is quite plain that it is not statesmanship, still less is it Liberal statesmanship, by delay and coercion to make the sense of grievance more deeply seated and more widely diffused. It is not even humane. For who feels the grievance? Women. And against whom must they feel it? Men. Does any man in his senses *wish* that the grievance shall be so deeply inbitten that it will take generations to heal? I believe not. I believe too that every bit of work that is done to get the vote ought to be done in such a way as to make the use of the vote run smoothly, when at last it is attained. Militant methods, whether of martyrdom or war, are useless for that.



## CHAPTER XVI

### THE OLD ADAM AND THE NEW

"Decay," said Seithenyn, "is one thing, and danger is another. Everything that is old must decay. That the embankment is old, I am free to confess; that it is somewhat rotten in parts, I will not altogether deny; that it is any the worse for that, I do most sturdily gainsay. It does its business well: it works well: it keeps out the water from the land and it lets in the wine upon the High Commission of Embankment. Cup-bearer, fill. Our ancestors were wiser than we: they built it in their wisdom; and, if we were to be so rash as to try to mend it, we should only mar it."

"The stonework," said Teithrin, "is sapped and mined: the piles are rotten, broken and dislocated: the floodgates and sluices are leaky and creaky."

"That is the beauty of it," said Seithenyn. "Some parts of it are rotten, and some parts of it are sound."

"It is well," said Elphin, "that some parts are sound: it were better that all were so."

"So I have heard some people say before," said Seithenyn; "perverse people, blind to venerable antiquity: that very unamiable sort of people who are in the habit of indulging their reason. But I say, the parts that are rotten give elasticity to those that are sound: they give them elasticity, elasticity, elasticity. If it were all sound, it would break by its own obstinate stiffness: the soundness is checked by the rottenness, and the stiffness is balanced by the elasticity. There is nothing so dangerous as innovation."—THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK, *The Misfortunes of Elphin*.

THE women's movement is a great movement of adaptation. It is not directed against the community, nor against any section of the com-

munity. It is not anti-man: no movement for the liberation of woman can do man anything but good; for modern men to try to keep women in the old ways, while they go ahead, is a ridiculous attempt to produce an anachronism which is foredoomed. It is not anti-social: when people bring this accusation against it, they generally mean that it is anti-maternal; but the progressive women desire that motherhood should be as free and beneficent and instructed as human effort can make it, and they desire, too, that it shall be possible for far more women to have the opportunity of motherhood. It is not anti-democratic; for the extension of liberty and representation to the masses of women will diminish the privileges of the few. It is the anti-suffragists who are anti-democratic. They tell us that the opposition of women to their own enfranchisement is unprecedented and proves that there must be some great harm in liberty, which women feel, while men have never resisted their own enfranchisement. This is not true. Slaves, even male slaves, have been known to object to manumission. But, as a matter of fact, if you will inquire, you will find that nearly all the opposition of women is directed against the enfranchisement of other women, not themselves. Most anti-suffragists will agree that some women are fit for the vote. Scarcely any woman thinks that she herself is unfit; it is *the other women* who are unfit. When Mrs. Humphry Ward speaks of the incurable political ignorance

of women, she does not mean that *she* is ignorant. *It is the other women who are ignorant.* Men have been every bit as strongly convinced that *other men* should not have the vote. It is undemocratic, it is arrogant, it is profoundly selfish, but it is human, not feminine, to endeavour to maintain privilege.

We are in for very big changes—social, economic and political. No one can doubt it. In what spirit are we going to make those changes? They are long overdue, and the amount of needless suffering caused by our slowness in adaptation is appalling. Dead creeds cumber the ground in all directions, and men make no serious effort either to resuscitate or decently to bury them. We say one thing and we do the other, and we merit the certificate given to us by international acclamation, of being the most canting nation on earth. Some of us do not like change. When did older people ever like change? Change implies thinking, and if there is one thing the majority of people hate more than another it is thinking. There is always in most of us a pathetic hope that some day we shall come to a state where the machinery of life will go of itself and we shall be safe and free from the necessity—so exhausting—of eternal vigilance. Free also from the terrible necessity of judging for ourselves and from the difficult task of loving our neighbour as ourselves. But those who hate change—the catlike people with whom I have every sympathy—should ask themselves, “Am I going to stop just here? And, if so, why?”

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Is this really the warmest, prettiest spot, and is there room for the others here? " Most people who know even a corner of life, as it is for the less fortunate, would admit that the present does not offer the most perfect conditions imaginable for all. " But it might be worse, and so we will not move, for fear of worse befalling. All the efforts of our forefathers, all their mistakes and sacrifices and heroisms we will accept, but this generation will not add one brave deed to the record of time." If this opinion were universal, this generation would be dead, and rotting fast.

A certain type of man is never tired of boasting that this is a " man's world " and that men have made it. They certainly have made many things, some good and some bad. But whatever they have made of the world, this type of man expects woman to be an impossible She,—impossible in the world he has chosen to make around her. This kind of man professes to admire beauty, peace, the amenities of life, and these are to be given him, if you please, by woman. He does not see that man has himself largely destroyed the beauty, peace and amenity of life. He has created the modern industrial system ; he has taken women's work out of the home ; he has filled the air with smoke and clangour ; he has polluted the rivers ; he has based the growth of millions of pounds upon the destruction of millions of human bodies ; he has driven the humane spirit out of his activities, and then he has called upon woman to maintain

it alone. She cannot do it alone. It is not reasonable to expect women to be capable of what Whitman finely calls "sane, athletic motherhood," in the midst of the noise and cruelty and dirt and meanness in which the daughters of the poor are reared, or of the futility and silliness to which so many of the daughters of the rich are heirs.

Women may not have produced great works of art, but they are artists in life. They are often said to be nearer nature than men. Certainly they seem to have a keener sense of reality and of essentials. They can be the greatest inspiration, when they are intellectually alive, when they have joy and freedom. In families where the women's movement has opened the doors and windows, one sees delightful specimens of young women: jolly girls, whose noble bodies and cheerful rosy faces and frank eyes make older women happy to look on. One sees good fellowship with men and honesty and lively intelligence. One sees even the older women, some of them, gladly leaving off playing the lady and joining in the fellowship of sexes, classes and ages.

It is this genius for living that must be altogether liberated, and with it we shall see an immense liberation of the organising and governing power of women. The union of practicality and ideality, of which I have already spoken, must be used to its utmost. Women are less pompous and less wasteful than men. They "cut the cackle" and get to business sooner; I cannot conceive of a

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body of women tolerating the sort of thing that goes on in the House of Commons, where men are allowed to go on repeating themselves and other people, for interminable weary hours, what time they are lamenting the congestion of business. Women are not so much taken up with votes of thanks and compliments ; vested interests are less their concern.

The growth of humaner notions is both the fruit and the promise of comradeship ; it is seen in the change of ideas about education and about crime and will appear in the ideas about war. People are realising that many vices are the result of the absence of healthy pleasures. We shall not need to punish so much for cruelty, drink, and sexual offences, when we have given people other things to think about and live for ; nor for idleness and theft, when we have made employment safe. The reforms of the future are going to be constructive, not punitive, and in all these women's gifts will be priceless.

Men who wish to keep women in subjection justify themselves by two claims : (1) Those of men, their needs and appetites ; (2) those of children. With regard to the needs of men, it is certainly essential that women should understand them, else they will be as stupid about men as men have been about women, and few conditions are so fertile in suffering as stupidity. The men, therefore, who, like Sir Almroth Wright, declare that men will not tolerate epicene institutions, are hope-

lessly wrong, for if there are to be two worlds, the man's and the woman's, and if all their work and their thinking are to be done apart, and if men are all the same to go on arranging the lives of women, with whom they have no relations but physical relations of sex, there will be less and less of that understanding, without which there can never be peace. Men who say greedily, "This world is ours, and we will give you just so much of it as we please, and it is for you to be thankful," are blaspheming. The world is not theirs to give, and although woman cannot fight man with physical force, let man not think that to give woman her liberty is to confer a favour upon her. It is only to do his duty, as a man is bound to do.

The men who are afraid women will not see eye to eye with them on the matter of men's temptations, use a double-edged argument, when they declare that there must be a double standard of sexual morality. It is sometimes based upon the physiological fact that a man can "have" a hundred children in the time that it takes a woman to "have" one. But this is to misuse words. A man does not have a child, nor does a woman: a man and woman together have a child. And, if we even conceded that promiscuity in a man would not be wrong, provided he could be promiscuous by himself, how can anyone defend promiscuity in a man, if it infallibly involves the corruption of women? Those who wish to defend promiscuity must find a better weapon than the double standard;

for if promiscuity is bad in a woman, it must be bad that a man should corrupt a woman, and there is the added stain on this particular badness that it is mean and cowardly as well, for when he has corrupted her in this way, he not only deserts her, but he hales her before his tribunals and punishes her.

When men advocate the subjection of women for the sake of the child, it is difficult to speak with patience of the monumental conceit and arrogance of the notion. Women do not sentimentalise so much about children, because they are a part of women's work, and you do not sentimentalise about your work. I have said (Chapter XIII.) that girls ought not to be expressly trained to be mothers, and to prevent misunderstanding, it may be well to touch upon positive education.

Nothing in all the circumstances of a girl's upbringing ought to be allowed to injure her health, and, in consequence, her physical capacity to bear healthy children. Much of the anxiety expressed as to whether a girl may be perfectly healthy, as an individual, and yet unable to bear children, is misplaced. It is quite true that the finest types of women are likely to be less prolific than the more degraded type. The feeble-minded are the most prolific of all. It seems you cannot have both quantity and quality. But the great need of the world is precisely quality. Healthy girls are not sterile, and the causes of sterility are not to be found in the women's movement; they are to be



found in idleness and luxury on the one hand, and in poverty on the other; beyond everything, they are to be found in vice and excess. The miserable health of the women of our working classes—the enormous majority of our women, that is to say—is one of the greatest dangers and social crimes of the day. But even all middle-class girls are not as healthy as they might be. There is a certain amount of overpressure in lessons and in games, and one knows of many cases where girls at home are worried into sickness by the conflicting claims upon them. Sometimes one hears of grotesque ignorance on the part of school- and house-mistresses, even on the part of mothers, of the very elements of personal hygiene. Girls should be taught from an early age to practise the hygiene of their own bodies, and to take a pride in being and keeping fit, and they should not think shame of easing off when they are not fit. It is most important in schools to get a sensible public opinion that encourages neither slackness nor prudery, and it is for the teachers to be well enough grounded in physiology to know how to direct and maintain this public opinion. A considerable amount of toughening is good for girls as for boys. Looking into the causes of overpressure, both mental and physical, one sees that most of it would never have occurred, if men had not made it so hard for women to get opportunities. Men have in the past so often argued that women and girls should have the desired opportunities, if they could fulfil

the same conditions as boys and men, and I can remember in my schooldays a tremendous pressure to show that girls could fulfil the same conditions as boys. The women of the future will claim freedom and endowment when they fulfil the conditions suitable for women and girls.

Girls, as well as boys, should, *before puberty*, be taught the simple facts of sex, and this should be done in connection with other simple science teaching. They will accept these facts quite serenely, if they are not greatly stressed and differentiated from other knowledge. They should not be troubled with pathology until they are full grown. Boys and girls should be brought up together, and the barrack system of living should be entirely abolished for both sexes. This does not mean that boys and girls should do all the same things, either in work or play; these should be adapted to the ascertained capacities of the individuals and not arranged on rigid *a priori* schemes. If the girl has grown to young womanhood with a healthy and active body and mind, she will have all the essentials for good motherhood, and if she wishes to learn the details of mothercraft, by all means give her opportunity to do so. But it is not necessary, or even desirable, to force every young woman to do this. If she is broadly developed as a human being, she can learn mothercraft when she is about to marry. Then, indeed, she should learn it, and the man who is about to marry should also study the duties of parentage.

It is one of the fond delusions of middle-class reactionaries that a girl will be a better mother if she idles about at home when she has left school, instead of taking up some definite and attaching work. This is absolutely untrue. Many of the qualities that go to make a good mother can be developed and strengthened in other work. The aimless, vacuous young woman of our middle classes is a standing reproach to her parents, who are silly enough to require or allow her so to waste all her virtue, and in the end allow it to die of atrophy. The parasitic daughters require a whole book to themselves, and I hope they will get it. For my part, when I consider the mixture of petting and tyrannising to which they are subjected in the home, I am more often surprised by their sense than by their folly. That they ever do anything useful is to their credit, when one thinks how their lives are ordered to discourage purpose, concentration, thoroughness, independence and responsibility.

Women, who bear the children, will be increasingly concerned, as they grow in mental stature, with the quality of the children produced. Theirs, it is said, is the task of handing on the torch of life. They must ask themselves, with ever deepening sense of responsibility, what is the life they are making? Is it worthy? And, while sterility will rightly trouble them, because it is the result of disease, they will not allow themselves to be frightened by the smaller birth-rate per woman. They will perhaps think that the best remedy

would be to make motherhood possible for the millions of maidens, now childless against their will. As they know more, they will recognise with joy that a woman's natural instinct to give herself when she loves and not otherwise, is a sound racial instinct, and that many problems will be solved when the action of natural selection is counter-balanced by sexual selection. When invited by reactionaries to widen still further the breach between men and women, and to admire the effects of specialisation and division of labour, women will perhaps ask themselves what these have done, even in the industrial world, and question whether they desire the same results in the family. The worker has lost his old joy in the work ; the product of his work has lost beauty and excellence ; the relations between employer and employee have become inhuman. Do we really wish, we women, to see these results in the home ? Do men ?

And woman not only bears the child, but she is its natural protector and guardian. In the way civilised men regard assaults on children, in their helplessness to protect the child from bad men,—and women,—in the monstrous absurdity of the phrase “the criminal child,” and all the cruelties and stupidities involved in that phrase, one sees how men, with the best intentions, have failed, because they would insist upon doing women's work. Man is legally, by the laws man has made, the only parent of the child, and the condition of the child truly reflects this legal fiction. When

men go abroad for a living, for adventure, for glory or for plunder, what becomes of their regard for the child? They beget everywhere, children, surely the most deserted on earth, who have neither father nor country, and they leave the problem of half-breeds as a most bitter inheritance for their children's children. Letourneau says that legal monogamy has for its object the regulation of succession and the division of property; so Hagar and Ishmael in all times and nations have been repudiated.

Now, at last, there are signs that the light is breaking. Knowledge is showing men that neither their own happiness nor the welfare of the child can ever be served by the subjection, the crippling or the thwarting of women. And intelligent men are coming over in their thousands. Even a very rough crowd in the Midlands, that had been stoning the women's suffrage pilgrims, because they were supposed to be militants, cried out to them as they went home, after a meeting, "We are all for it!" meaning they were all for the enfranchisement of women, although they felt so shocked at the violence of the militants that they felt impelled themselves to resort to worse violence.

Men have said to us over and over again, "You are quite right. You ought to get it, and you will get it. Go on fighting. It is a woman's question, and you women must solve it for yourselves." It is strange to women that such men have not seen the baseness of this attitude. It is

strange that they cannot see that they alone have the power, and that, under their fair words, they are in effect saying, "Get it, if you can," for all the world like a bullying big boy who has stolen the smaller boy's bread. It is strange that they should be willing in this matter to show themselves so inferior to women; for when did women ever say to their menfolk: "Your freedom, your dignity, your ideals are nothing to me. These are men's questions; let them settle their affairs without our help"? Just as women have carried men in their arms, when they were weak and whimpering and ugly, till they could run alone; just as women have nourished the babes at their breasts, and given their lives for them, so have we women (in the words of Miss Anna Shaw) "carried all the weak causes in our arms, until they were strong and could run alone, and then—then—they forgot us!" In the French Revolution, at Peterloo, in the American crusade against slavery, among the Boers in South Africa, in the Chinese revolution, in Ireland now, when did women ever separate their lives and interests from those of men?

There is this excuse for the men: first, that they are by nature slower than women, and are only now awakening to the fact that, while men's lives have changed greatly during the past century, women's lives have changed immensely more, and that something like a complete revolution has taken place in the education and industrial position of women, and they cannot be expected

to be the same as they were before these changes ; and, secondly, that unlimited power is more demoralising even than subjection. Where men are treating women as equally human, the sense of comradeship is growing. One of the most moving speeches made at Budapest, at the Congress of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance in June 1913, was a very simple statement by Miss Jenny af Forselles, a Finnish Member of Parliament. She said that, in the great national sorrow and the terrible struggle with a less civilised nation, their solace and inspiration was the comradeship between the women and men. Those who heard her will not forget the quiet thrill of her aspiration, expressed in her Biblical, slightly archaic German — "*Wir wollen seyn ein einig Volk*," and the hope it gave, that in some distant day the union of peoples might be a union of the whole *free* people.

I have refrained as much as possible from dogmatism about the true nature of Woman and about what women will do. I know some people confidently assert that women are better than men, and that women are going to perform miracles. Well, some of us think that the movement itself, now, is miraculous, and have had ample reward in the comradeship of men in the movement.

"Divinity hath surely touched my heart ;  
I have possessed more joy than earth can lend ;  
I may attain what time shall never spend.  
Only let not my duller days destroy  
The memory of thy witness and my joy."

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Our faith would be weak if it could be dashed by the human faults in women, and of women in the movement as well as all the other women. It is cowardice, merely, to turn from the complex, fascinating, troublesome, real woman to a vapid ideal, or a devitalised norm. We must understand the real women and the real men, and have faith in them. Fear and distrust are no leaders for brave folk. The prayer which the worker in human material must ever have at heart is, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief."



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